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VOL. 281, NO. 3

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

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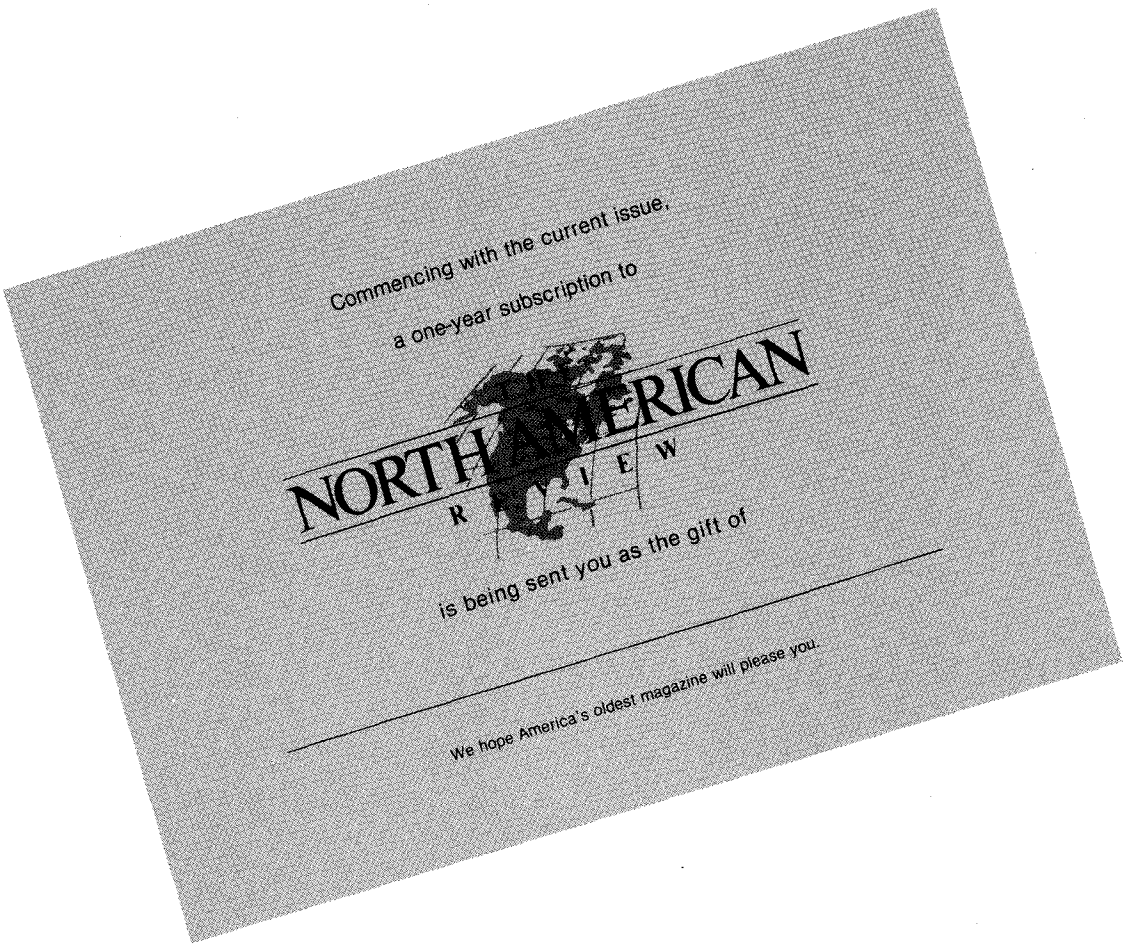

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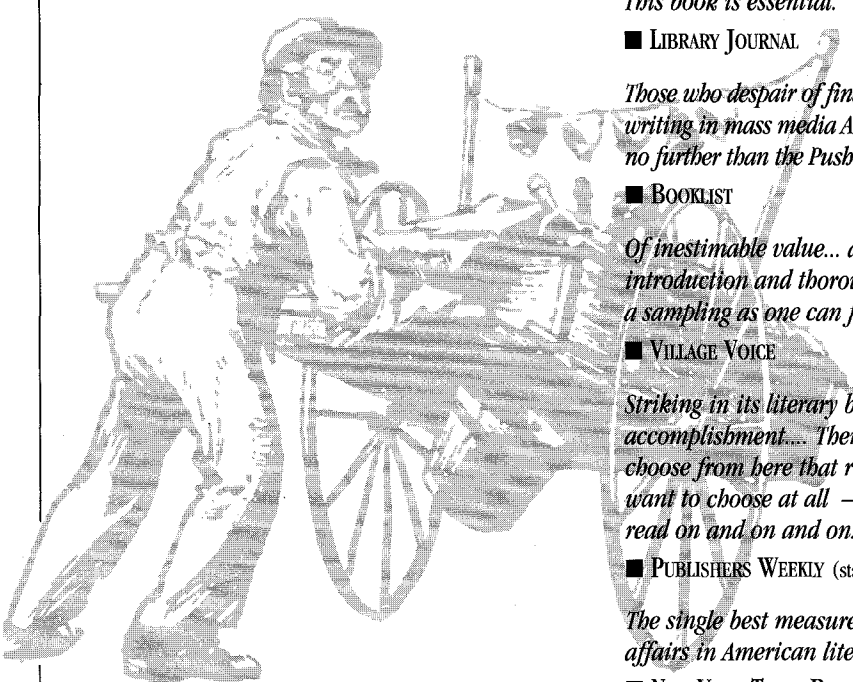

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

■

Is this an animal issue? Here are pieces about cats and dogs and salmon—including a story told from the dog's point of view and even a figurative beast caged in mystical Cuba—mingled with fictions of salesmanship and love, despair and betrayal, and essays natural, literary and spiritual. Think of us as good reading unleashed.

Books recent and forthcoming from NAR authors: *Live Girls* (Knopf), by Beth Nugent and *Sweet Remedy* (Simon & Schuster), by Linda Phillips Ashour, both novels; *Waiting for the Fireworks* (South Carolina), a story collection by Norman Sage; Nicole Cooley's *Resurrection* (Louisiana State), a collection of poems, and winner of the 1995 Walt Whitman Award. The University of Missouri Press has published Joe David Bellamy's *Literary Luxuries: American Writing at the End of the Millennium*, and David Hellerstein's memoir, *A Family of Doctors*, has been re-issued in paperback.

Of note: Margaret Atwood's "Morning in the Burned House" has been selected for inclusion in *The Best American Poetry 1996*.

An early warning: With the first issue of 1997, the cover price of the NAR will rise to $4.95, and the annual subscription rate will rise to $22. We regret the increase, but we will have held the line for six years against climbing paper, printing, and postal costs, and something—or someone—had to give. We believe the magazine is worth its new price and trust our readers will agree. We will accept new and renewal subscriptions at the old $18 rate until September 1st.

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THE
NORTH AMERICAN
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To the Well and Back

TERRY OSBORNE

IN JUNE OF 1988 two men, one of them carrying a tightly rolled map under his arm, stopped by our house on Cobble Hill. They were looking for water.

East Thetford's old municipal well, a shallow spring-fed one closer to the village, had been contaminated by surface runoff, they said: road salt from Route 113, coliform from who knows where. The water in the village wasn't safe to drink anymore. So here they were, a mile uphill, scouting out a new source.

We talked about our well and the other ones in the area for a while. Then, the one man unrolled his map on the hood of my car, spreading his hands across it the way you'd smooth a creased bed sheet. It was a white photocopy with grey boundaries and short dark lines skewing across the middle. Petting the slant-lines with his finger, he finally pointed to the darkest one.

"This is it," he said.

A fissure in the rock, a great ledge sluice, a rich vein of water running somewhere under Cobble Hill. The solution to East Thetford's problems. If the map was right, he said, the crack wasn't far from the southern edge of our property, where the land rises steeply. Maybe right underneath us.

That prospect was enticing, I admit. Since we'd moved into our house nine months before, I'd been uncomfortable with our water, or with the *idea* of it. Our well was a shallow one, sited at the lowest corner of the property, in the woods behind the sugarhouse. It was about fifteen feet deep—five cylindrical concrete tiles stacked one on top of the other—with the top eighteen inches poking out above ground and covered by a cement lid with an iron eye-bolt in the middle. Draped over the exposed top was a tattered sheet of black polyethylene plastic. Its edges were pinned to the ground by rocks.

We were told, when we first looked at the house, that the well had provided water in even the driest summers, when other people's deep wells had failed. That was unusual for a shallow well, and a good sign.

But there were problems. The water was iron-rich, which isn't unusual for this area, but it led me to wonder about other things getting into the water, a possibility confirmed by a water consultant who knew our well site: "Hey," he said, "it's at the lowest point on the property. *Everything* leaches down there. Bacteria and all."

Finally there was the idea, the invulnerable idea, of digging fifteen feet into the earth and expecting the water there to be plentiful and clean. A nice thought, but these days?

I'd seen the betrayal of that idea the year before, when I was writing an article on hazardous waste in Vermont. I talked to Clara and Tom Bolton (not their real names), who lived in Springfield and had drilled a deep well in 1962.

"We had it tested and analyzed by the state. It couldn't have been better or purer water," Clara said.

Seven years later their water turned foul-smelling, so foul that they stopped using it, carrying some home instead from a community well, until the same stench turned up there.

New tests done on the Boltons' water showed the dangerous presence of heavy metals and volatile organic compounds like mercury, cobalt, cadmium, beryllium and selenium. The chemicals ate away at the enamel in their tub and the nickel plating on their faucets. The substance oozed from the taps in a jelly.

It turned out that various chemicals, along with the town's other waste, had been poured on the ground across the street from the Boltons when that property was the town dump; over time the chemicals percolated underground into the water supply. There had been no way for the Boltons to know.

Clara said she had had cancer, her husband still had circulatory problems, and her granddaughter had been born with birth defects She blamed the water. To find water they trusted, she and Tom now traveled seventy-five miles every week to a clear spring, where they filled as many bottles as they could fit in the back of their car More than the rest of us, the Boltons had come to know the weight of water.

And their experience amplified the mystery behind the idea of *our* water, everyone's water: Invisibility. How could you know something for sure if you couldn't see it? If the intricacies of groundwater movement through rock—the faults and folds, porosity and permeability, pressure and gradients and gravity—happened out of sight, how could you tell for sure whether there was a river the size of the Connecticut under you, or just parched gneiss?

It would have been comforting to fall back on the "water wonderland" image Samuel Williams communicated in 1794: "In the plains, hills, and mountains in this part of the continent," he wrote in *A Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, "there is scarcely a place in which water may not be found at the depth of

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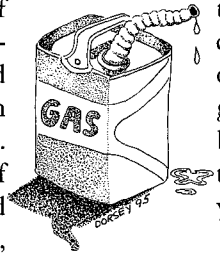
thirty or forty feet from the surface of the earth . . . . the earth at that depth is well saturrated [sic] with water; nor does it fail, nor is the temperature of earth at that depth much affected, in the hottest, or in the dryest season that we ever have."

Here, almost 200 years later the man-with-the-map was saying almost the same thing. Sure, he wasn't just going to drill *anywhere;* he was making an educated guess, something scientific. What he had in his mind's eye, though, was the same kind of bounty—a stream, a river, a water-rich crevasse hundreds of feet underground.

But even if you found it, I kept wondering, how could you avoid the Boltons' fate, how could you tell for sure what was coming from across the street?

That was enough of the questions: I had to see inside our well myself. Then I'd know for sure.

One day I marched over and kicked the stones away. Pulled back the plastic cover. Squatted down and pushed against the rim of the concrete lid. No movement. Leaned over, wrapped both hands around the iron eye bolt and pulled hard. Nothing. Threw myself against the rim. Nope. Tried each method again in turn, with no more success than before. Not an inch.



So I surrendered. Pulled the plastic back on and pinned the corners down with the stones. Convinced myself I didn't really need to see inside anyway: what did I think I'd find—cider-colored water? a mini Love Canal? a swirl of jellied microorganisms? Nah.

Instead, I vowed to drill a deep well sometime soon. *That* would take care of it. I was sure it would. And in the meantime, we'd buy gallon jugs of water for cooking and drinking. And I'd forget about that damned well.

Hardly. I couldn't escape the uncertainty. I kept wondering what it looked like inside, what our water *looked* like. Sometimes when I was over on that side of the property I'd sidle up to the sugarhouse and peek around the corner at the well, dark and stunted and wrinkled. It looked like a gangrenous wart in the woods.

2.

ON A SUMMER AFTERNOON six years earlier a friend name Bushy took my wife and me to a waterfall/swimming hole near the base of Mt. Washington in New Hampshire. It was hot; we were going for a swim.

We stopped at the cliff's edge opposite the top of the falls and looked down thirty feet to the pool. It had rained hard earlier in the week, and the waterfall now broke full and mean over the edge. Below, the pool churned with white foam.

"I've never seen it this strong!" Bushy said, his eyes wide and excited. There was more than swimming on his mind.

Pulling me to the edge, he pointed. "The key to the jump is to hit the right spot. If you jump out too far you'll hit those rocks. If you don't jump far enough, you'll either hit the near ones or get swept under them by the current. You can't see it but there's kind of a shelf there and you can get caught underneath." He bent me over the cliff edge to see where he meant. "So you gotta hit the middle."

Wait. This was supposed to be a swimming trip. No one had said anything about jumping.

Two or three other people were sitting on the cliff admiring the rush of water. There was a rumor that someone had been hurt recently making the jump.

"*I* wouldn't do it," one of the observers said.

That was testimony enough for my wife. She wasn't going to jump and tried to talk me out of it too.

But, do you see, it was too late. I'd had my chance right away to say no, and I hadn't. Now it was too late. The issue was no longer rational; it belonged to my swelling, brain-clogging male ego. Pride. If Bushy jumped, I had to too.

And he did, a perfect feet-first jump, knife-clean into the center of the pool. He bobbed up and swam easily to the far edge.

Let me be clear about this: despite the prodding of machismo, despite the calculations I'd made in my head, despite the confidence that I knew in strict geometric terms where the center of the pool was, despite the fact that I'd seen Bushy hit that spot like an arrow in a bull's eye, I did NOT want to jump. What worried me most was not being able to see what I was jumping into: the pool surface was clouded by bubbles. I kept imagining myself flailing underwater, held down by what John McPhee called "the great, almost imponderable weight of water, enough to crush a thousand people." I guess I imagined my own death.

I wish I could say that what I finally did was inspired by some epiphany, a moment of transcendent knowledge or insight, a clear intuitive vision of my own survival that willed my body into the center of the pool. But there was nothing that dramatic. It was just pride.

And so I jumped.

I remember the leap clearly because there was an instant of goosebumping fear, and surrender. It was a strange feeling, that first airborne moment: having tried to see and know everything myself, control my own trajectory, I finally had to behave as if I didn't care. Dropping fast, all of my best intentions were reduced to an act of faith.

3.

EIGHT MONTHS AFTER the two men visited my house, I followed through on a deep well. It was February of 1989 when Bill Bailey brought his percussion drill over and set it up. With the ground so frozen he couldn't easily lay supply pipes, but he said he could still drill, and February was the best time for him. As long as we didn't need the water right away, he said he'd come back and lay the pipes in the spring, after the ground had thawed. So for days our house rang with the drill's rhythmic hammering.

Before siting the well, I researched as much as possible. I located our closest neighbor's septic system and tried to imagine whether their effluent would perco-

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late downhill toward our well. I asked other neighbors about the depth of their drilled wells and the quality of their water. On our own property we had three criteria: we wanted the well close to the house (laying the supply pipes would be less expensive that way), at least 100 feet from our own leach field (as required by town health regulations), and as out-of-sight as possible. Finally, we made sure we weren't interfering with the oil tank buried next to the house.

Then it was a matter of picking the exact spot. After all of the research I'd done, I'm embarrassed to say that I chose it with no more care than an impatient child. Not once in that final stage did I consider the earth itself—the rock or soil type, the topography. Maybe because it seemed so unknowable. In the end it was like pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey: I closed my eyes and pointed.

I know now how naïve that was, how easily that hole could have come up dry. Luckily, it didn't work out that way. After a week of drilling, Bill found a good supply of water. Of course, without supply pipes we couldn't use it, but the water was there anyway, forty feet from the house.

That irony seemed more tantalizing a week later, when my wife and I returned home from a weekend away to find no water at all. The faucets—all of them—dribbled, then hissed, then went silent and dry. Once flushed, the toilet tanks never refilled.

Having never been without water before, I panicked, and the next morning left hysterical messages with two local plumbers. But it had been a frigid, snowless weekend, one of many that winter; the frost had crept a little deeper underground, a little further into people's houses, and the plumbers had plenty of other pipes to thaw.

Frozen pipes was one possibility. The other was a dry well, and a dry well meant no water until spring.

After trying the plumbers, I called Bill Bailey and explained the problem as best I could. He listened, then said, "I bet somewhere between the house and the well them pipes is froze." But he thought we ought to check inside the well to be safe.

So with the leverage of an iron bar stuck through the center eyebolt (Bill's idea), we slid the well lid halfway off. It was a clear morning, cold as glass, with the sun still low behind the pines. The woods around the well were in shadow, and it was even darker and colder inside the well. When I bent over the crescent opening and looked in, all I could see was the light of the reflected sky and my own silhouette. There was water.

How much, I couldn't tell. The water was all surface and reflection, all shadow and light. It gave no hint of depth, and we hadn't brought anything to measure the water level with. The only sign I could make out was a dark ring around the well three feet above the water line. If that meant anything, it was that the well wasn't at its high water mark. But I didn't know if that was a normal February depth or not.

Back inside our basement Bill showed me a way to try to move the water in the pipes. He turned the water pump on for ten to fifteen seconds then shut it off for that long. On, then off. On, then off. Five or ten times before giving the pump a rest. He was trying to create a surge of water to break through the ice dam. If the water could pierce even a pinhole in the ice we'd have our supply back.

I spent the next four days trying the pump-surge method, in the meantime solving our water needs in the only way I knew how: I carried water in from the well.

With a two-and-a-half-gallon plastic bucket and a spool of clothesline, I hauled water out of the well and carried five gallons at a time to the house. Actually, to the washing machine, the cleanest and most accessible reservoir inside. I filled it full every evening after work.

Whatever water we used we scooped from there; any hot water we wanted we heated on the stove. We poured a pitcher of heated water over our heads and called it a

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shower. We dipped a wash cloth into a pot of water and said we'd bathed. We flushed the toilets only when our sense of hygiene overcame our need to conserve. We didn't wash any clothes. We used as few dishes as possible. Even so we used as much as thirty gallons a day.

Aldo Leopold wrote, "If one has cut, split, hauled and piled his own good oak, and let his mind work all the while, he will remember much about where the heat comes from, and with a wealth of detail denied to those who spend the week end in town astride a radiator."

The same can be said for water: when you carry it in by the bucket, I assure you that you remember how it got there. A gallon of water weighs about eight pounds, which means that we were using—and I was carrying—250 pounds of water each day. And suddenly my imagination ran away with the idea: I couldn't help thinking about water in terms of its weight, couldn't believe how casually we'd used it before. A five-minute shower: 250 lbs. Toilet flush: 40 lbs. Dishwasher load: 100 lbs. Washing machine, full load: 250 lbs. On average, each of us uses up to 800 lbs. of water each day. And I suspect we do because we don't have to put it on our backs.

Towards evening on the fourth day, the fourth day of lugging water, I was mindlessly working the pump-surge method when I heard water trickle in the pipes. Or thought I did. Was I hearing things? Nope. It was a trickle. Definitely a trickle—the sound of little glass beads sprinkled on a dinner plate. Slowly the pump stopped its strained whining. The needle on its pressure gauge—the one frozen at zero for days—moved. We had water again!

In four days, I'd come to know water more intimately than I had probably hoped to—as a necessity and a luxury, as a function of gravity, as manual labor. In the months afterwards, I did the best I could to conserve, buying low-flow shower and faucet heads, and dams for the toilet tanks. That night, though, I turned the shower on and splashed

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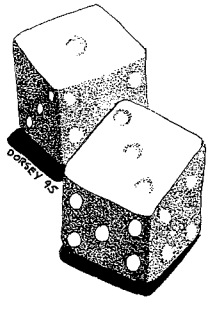
around in it like a child under the spray of a summertime sprinkler.

4.

LIKE OTHER CREATURES, humans' interactions with the world are defined by the limits of our senses. We haven't the pinpoint eyesight of eagles and owls, nor the echolocation ability of bats; as Diane Ackerman points out in her book *A Natural History of the Senses*, we don't communicate with the ultrasonic frequencies praying mantises do, nor the infrasonic frequencies of elephants. Still, we've learned ways to improve our perceptual ability: "We're skilled extenders of our senses," she writes.

Often we extend them with tools. We use binoculars and telescopes to discern what our eyes miss at a distance, night vision goggles to see what we can't in the dark. We use long-range side-scan sonar to map the topography of the sea floor, ultrasonic waves to see a fetus in the womb. We position antennas to listen for patterned messages from deep space.

It was this sense-extending idea that drew me to geologist Ken Bannister. I wanted to learn how professionals went about finding groundwater, how they could know, even trust, the existence of something when they couldn't see it. Ken, I knew, could find water. In fact, he may be the most effective water finder in the state. He was involved in locating East Thetford's new municipal well, and in more than twenty cases he has sited a town's most productive well. In Fairfield, where they'd been looking for a community water supply for over two decades, and where the average yield of a well was less than two gallons per minute, Ken sited a well that yielded 100 gallons per minute. Rolling out his master map of the entire town of Fairfield, a twenty-five-foot aerial map onto which all of his information gets plotted, Ken explained the project to me. It's a methodical scientific process involving layers of information—geological and topographical, historical and hydrological—sifted through progressively smaller sieves of criteria until the only things remaining are potential well sites.



What Ken does first is look at driller's logs—the accounts of the wells drilled in town—to determine where the most and least productive wells are. He plots them on the master map. If he's lucky the logs might mention something about site deposit, hinting at where old underground valleys may have been. If so, he marks them on the map too.

Next he does a fracture trace analysis. Using a stereoscope, which makes a flat landscape stand out in relief, he looks at infrared aerial photos and tries to discern the structural features of the bedrock. He's interested in indications of fractured bedrock, since fractures can be waterbearing.

"What you look for are tonal changes in vegetation," he says. "A lot of times when you have a fracture trace that runs across a field, the vegetation or the soils above the fracture will be slightly different than the surrounding areas."

After that, Ken consults a bedrock map, looking for formations of coarse-grained, brittle rock that might be good aquifers. Those formations, along with the fracture trace results, get plotted on the master map.

You can imagine the data clutter on the master map—dots marking wells, slantlines for potential bedrock fractures, large wobbling ovals around various formations, the marks made in several colors, each with its own significance. But it's only because of the clutter that Ken can narrow down his site choices and head out to do the field work.

Once on site he uses two instruments. The first is a magnetometer, a device that measures the total intensity of the earth's magnetic field, which varies according to rock formation. Voids in rock provide different readings than solid rock, and voids are what he's interested in. He likens the magnetometer to creating a topographical map underground.

The second is a VLF (Very Low Frequency) receiver, a hand-held device which responds to low-frequency waves that a number of organizations (including the U.S. Navy) send into the earth. Once calibrated, the receiver makes a constant whine; when it goes quiet, you may have found a feature underground.

Traversing the entire area twice, first with one device then with the other, Ken takes readings every fifty feet. Back at the office he plots those readings on separate maps.

With the data collected, Ken is ready to pick out specific well sites. And it's what he does then—to find the exact drilling spot—that taught me the most about the way humans can come to know things. After analyzing driller's logs, trace analyses, site deposits, bedrock formations, and readings from the magnetometer and VLF receiver, just when you'd expect him to crunch numbers the hardest and apply his sharpest analytical criteria to the data, he leaves the office. He heads back out to the field. And he dowses.

Dowsing started for him twelve years ago at Sugarbush, when a dowser was called in to confirm Ken's finding and did: he dowsed the exact spot Ken had flagged. It wasn't the first time, either. On a number of earlier jobs the same thing had happened. But this time Ken was curious.

"How'd you do that?" he asked the dowser.

Handing over his rod, the dowser said, "Just ask it where the water is."

And when Ken did, he felt the rod go down right on the spot.

Since then he's become a devout dowser, even converting some of his office colleagues. There's something very real to it, he believes, something psychic or parapsychic; he won't pinpoint a well site anymore without dowsing for it first. And the way he talks about it, he gives the impression that dowsing is the method he has the most faith in,

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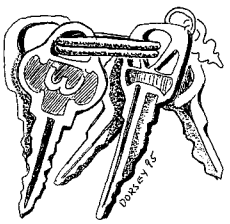
the one he'd keep over all the others if he had to choose.

"Long enough in the desert a man like other animals can learn to smell water," wrote Edward Abbey. "Can learn, at least, the smell of things associated with water—the unique and heartening odor of the cottonwood tree, for example, which in the canyonlands is the tree of life."



This, finally, is the sentiment that makes Ken's ability so compelling. It's not just that he can find water, it's the *way* he finds it—through the overlapping of senses, and even beyond the sensory and intellectual spheres to the intuitive. With his experience as guide, it seems possible that our sharpest perceptions, our most reliable knowledge can come to us in inexplicable ways: sometimes we can see best with our noses, hear best with our hands; sometimes we can know things most certainly without thinking about them at all.

Even with his degree in geology and elaborate tools—the fracture trace analyses and magnetometer and VLF receiver—he won't stake a claim to water until he can see it without his eyes. Holding a rod in his hands, he asks it a question, starts walking and waits for a tug.

5.

AT THE END OF 1989 construction crews started burying the last section of pipe for East Thetford's new well. The equipment rumbled up and down Asa Burton Road over the season's first snowfall.

Whether the two men found the fracture they were looking for I don't know for sure, but given that they tapped a dream supply in the woods on a neighbor's property a quarter mile from our house, and that the man-with-the-map was probably Ken Bannister, the odds are pretty good. The well was 300 feet deep and yielded 70 gallons a minute, more than enough to satisfy the thirty places in the village that would draw from it.

Our drilled well turned out to be a gusher too: 190 feet deep and more than 50 gallons a minute. For nine months of the year there's so much water that it flows out over the top of the well. The supply is enough to satisfy the whole village of East Thetford too, which leads me to believe that if there is a mystical underground river, we tapped into it as well. If we did, it was by the rawest of luck, though I like to imagine that in Ken Bannister fashion I selected the spot with an intuitive hunch I didn't know I had.

But the truth is, I know better than that. Ken's expertise confirmed to me my own limitations—that, like most people, my senses usually stick to the things they do best: my ears do the hearing, eyes the seeing, nose the smelling, etc. And when arranged together, that's it: the circumference of the senses determines the scope of the knowledge.

Even more, what happens *inside* the circumference—my process of knowing—feels no less limiting; it's frustratingly inconsistent and vacillating, where streaks of enlightenment can be followed by a startling ignorance, where after sensing the danger of a foaming waterfall pool, I might leap in anyway for no better reason than pride, or after researching a well site diligently I might finally choose it with a careless naïveté, or after marveling at the glinting surface of well water on a bright winter morning, I might mistake my own reflection for something important. "So it is with all men," Howard Elman thinks in Ernest Herbert's novel *The Dogs of March*. "Wise here, stupid there."

Depressing as those inconsistencies are, as much as they seem to doom me to shuffling pitifully in place, not ever knowing anything better than I knew before, I've also found in them the possibility of growth, a hope that over time each movement back and forth between stupidity and wisdom may, like a tide, erode and deposit knowledge in a more useful formation. So that, like hauling water by hand, emptying a large reservoir outside to fill a smaller one inside, the vacillating process of knowing—to the well and back, to the well and back, to the well and back—becomes the source of its own progress.

"To see takes time," Georgia O'Keeffe said, "like to have a friend takes time." Maybe that's it, finally—that the most trusted knowledge evolves like a patient relationship with something as inconsistent as your self. And along the way you're not only slowed by failures but teased along by occasional wisdom, pricks of intuition, or even by lucky successes, when, for instance, you bob to the surface in a swirling pool that had seemed bent on your destruction, and know the exhilaration of a breath.

The moment I remember best happened on a cold night in February 1989, just after the pipes had frozen. It would be the first night I carried water in. Flashlight in hand, I went out to the well to see what I could see. I used Bill Bailey's iron bar to lift the lid off, turned the flashlight on and looked in. A delicate frost clung like gauze to the upper inside walls of the well and six feet of water stood quietly below. Plenty of water, and it was so clear I could see all the way to the concrete bottom.

It was a frigid night, dark and quiet in the woods. Everything above ground, everything to about five feet underground, was frozen. But there in the cylinder was liquid. And the only sound I could hear was the echo of my own breathing, the only smell the richness of earth and water, the only sight the circular well bottom. A simple sensory communion, powerful and unforgettable.

It seems silly now, the unwavering conviction that came upon me then. Silly in light of the distrust I had held toward our well water to that point, the distrust that had convinced me to have a deep well drilled. The distrust that lingers in me even now.

At that moment I was overswept by a conviction, a thing I knew certainly: I knew I'd scoop that water out and carry it inside, even if I had to carry it a cup at a time. □

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In the Belly of the Beast

CONGER BEASLEY, JR.

I AM SITTING IN a ground-floor room inside the humid depths of a dilapidated apartment building in Central Havana. The time is early evening. Fading sunlight creeps down a long hall from a creaky wooden door that opens onto the street. The room in which I sit with a dozen other people smells of old sweat, cheap rum, cigar smoke, and home-made perfume. The room is dimly lit by a dangling bulb and a couple of candles. One candle sits on top of a cloth-draped table nudged against a wall; the second glows at the foot of the table, in front of a bouquet of yellow flowers and a wooden crucifix propped up in a glass of water.

Flanking the table, sitting in straight-backed chairs, are a *santero* and his assistant. The *santero*—a middle-aged man with caramel-colored skin—has puffy, sensual lips and liquid brown eyes. He wears a flowing white robe and a white skull cap; a red bandana covers his plump knees. In his left hand he grips the stub of a well-chewed cigar. Periodically—as he talks, as he listens, as he gazes into the air at the invisible presences lurking nearby—he lights the cigar and leaks smoke between his polished white teeth.

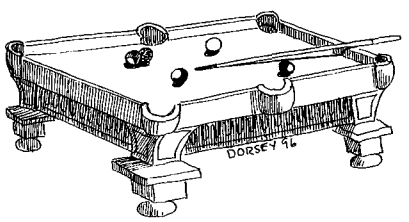
His assistant, a man in his early twenties, has a distinctly Asian face. He wears shorts, a red shirt, and scuffed white tennis shoes; a white skull cap, trimmed with red bunting, crowns his closely-cropped skull. In his right hand he clutches the stub of a twisted cigar. The skin of his pencil-thin legs is as smooth as a polished bannister.

The *santero* engages in a lengthy conversation with a small, fine-boned, elderly woman sitting in the center of the room, whose husband has recently passed away. As near as I can decipher, the woman is trying to cope with the loss, along with some memories of the man that aren't exactly pleasant. The *santero* listens attentively. He pours rum from a bottle into a coconut shell and drinks it down. He hands the bottle around, and everyone takes a drink.

A short, chunky, black woman wearing an emerald-green dress takes a swig from the bottle. A cunning expression creases her lumpy features. She glares suspiciously at her daughter sitting next to her on a bamboo stool. Then, without warning, she spits a mouthful of rum into her daughter's face. Unfazed, the daughter, whose name is Maritza—she's a nurse at a nearby hospital—wipes the rum from her cheeks and eyes. Her face is troubled and preoccupied. She looks down at the floor, then into her mother's eyes. Her own eyes are cloudy, introverted, withdrawn.

An undercurrent of psychic energy crackles through the room. What exactly is transpiring, I—a *blanco*, a *yanqui*, an outsider—can only guess at; the other women, young and old, commence to fidget and stir. (Later I'm told that the mother, seeing a spirit hovering around her daughter, spit rum in her face to frighten it away.)

The *santero* and the assistant watch the mother and daughter



with avid interest. The assistant jerks twice in his chair; an electric spasm twitches the length of his body. He seems, momentarily, to have been seized by something, which he manages, with a convulsive twist, to throw off. He smiles to himself and crosses his slim legs and lights his cigar.

Then it happens. Maritza, now fully inhabited by the spirit (whose name is Francisco), leaps to her feet, kicks over the stool, and shudders from head to toe. With a hoarse shout, she falls to her knees and lurches to the foot of the altar. With a vigorous lunge, she bites off the head of the candle. Flame, wick, wax . . . a good two inches of it. White-hot wax, smudged with scorch marks, wreathes her lips and chin; she thrashes around the floor, moaning in an incomprehensible dialect punctuated with familiar Spanish. Her voice plummets a couple of octaves into a harsh, croaky, masculine register; immediately her mother and a woman with shiny henna hair, wearing a white skirt and blue sweater, pull her to her feet.

Crying and barking, Maritza wobbles out of control; she stumbles, shivers, quakes, shimmies; she swings her arms like a pinwheel. Those of us sitting on stools and benches put up our hands protectively. Maritza's face has undergone a startling transformation; she seems preternaturally old. Her cheeks sag, her mouth trembles, her neck looks flabby and worn. Her glazed pupils roll partway under her drooping lids.

She works her swollen lower lip with exaggerated emphasis, as if the strange words spilling from her puckered mouth are too clumsy and explosive to utter in a normal fashion. Leaning forward in his chair,

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clutching his fleshy knees, the *santero* watches her intensely. The air inside the room tightens like a drum, against which Maritza pounds and flails, beating a discordant tattoo dictated by the fierce spirit that has taken complete possession of her body.

2.

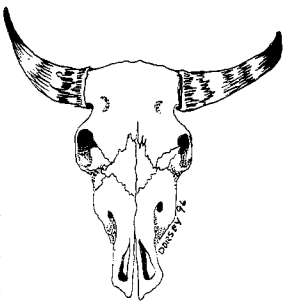
VICTOR BETANCOURT IS A short, stocky man with a square, muscular

JNAR
THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

"The training period for a *babalao* lasts eight years. All the verses must be learned verbatim. The texts have been handed down from ancient times. They contain solutions to all the problems facing mankind . . ."

Santiago—Cuba's second largest city, located at the eastern end of the 775-mile-long island—is the center of *santeria* worship for the beleaguered Communist nation. It is estimated today that 85 percent of the Cuban population practices *santeria*. Interest in the ancient belief, a syncretic fusion of Yoruba and Roman Catholicism, brought over by African slaves in the 17th century, has always been strong, though never so strong as now, in the wake of the hardships imposed by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the withdrawal of economic aid.

March of 1993 a savage winter blasted Cuba, g havoc and ction. Gigantic crashed over the all in Havana, inland for blocks, g basements and ls, backing up the ted sewer system y the Spanish in 9th century).



s throughout the island pre- he storm well in advance of ; their warnings were largely l. Since the storm the gov- it has changed its attitude; ere is talk of granting the s their own radio show the every month so their fore- ght benefit everyone.

a's dire economic condition the Special Period has con- d to the popularity of the . Between 1989 and 1994, imports of critical supplies ily from the Soviet Union) n $8 billion to $1.8 billion. one in Cuba has felt the Fuel is scarce; chronic black- nge the streets of the major nto gloomy darkness; food is rationed; the peso has been devalued. In July of 1993 the ment legalized the private dollars; a year later, everyone a is scrambling for green- s to buy food and clothing on the black market or in the well-stocked dollar stores.

The quest for dollars has spurred the government to expand the country's tourist services. Cuba boasts some of the finest beaches in the world. Mountain lakes offer first-rate bass fishing. Pristine coral reefs beckon to scuba divers.

Santeria has become an important element in this fiscal package, attracting New Age visitors from Europe, Canada, and Latin America looking for a hit of authentic folk culture and a quick dose of arcane spirituality. (Visitors from the U.S. are not included; the travel ban is still in effect, and the 34-year-old embargo, imposed upon Cuba by the Eisenhower Administration, continues to stifle the country's economy.)

Part of the attraction of *santeria* among the rank-and-file is inextricably bound up in the mystique of Fidel Castro. Now 68 years old, Fidel maintains a solid grip upon the affections of the majority of the people. The system may be criticized, the bureaucrats reviled, the U.S. personified as an oppressive demon, but through it all, with a nimbleness bordering on the magical, Fidel has retained his charisma.

Despite assassination attempts, despite economic blunders, despite the absence of Soviet aid, the sheer fact of Fidel's longevity is attributable in the eyes of many people to his alleged belief in *santeria*. He has weathered strife and change because he possesses special powers, because he can foretell the future, because *babalaos* such as Victor Betancourt remain dedicated to his leadership.

The alliance wasn't always so cozy. Marginalized as an exotic curio by the prerevolutionary dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, *santeria* adherents operated covertly in the 1940s and '50s. During the first decade of the revolution, techno-scientific solutions to social problems were popular, both in theory and in practice; as a Marxist, Fidel Castro looked disapprovingly upon the *santeros* and *babalaos*.

In reaction to the forced collectivization of Cuban society in the 1960s, nearly a million Cubans—white, professional, middle class; doctors, lawyers, the educated elite—fled the country. The population ratio tilted in favor of the blacks, who, during the bitter years of slavery and the struggle for inde-

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pendence in the 19th century, kept alive the spirit of the native religion.

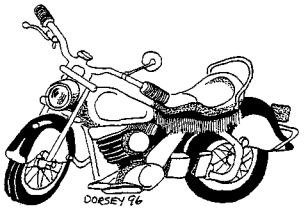
In a recent book, *Castro's Final Hour* (Touchstone 1993), Andres Oppenheimer suggests that the difficulties of the Special Period have forged a new alliance between Fidel and the *babalaos*. In return for an expanded role in the future of post-Soviet Cuba, the *babalaos*—similar to the *voudoun* priests of Haiti—today play an active part in monitoring the thoughts and activities of the predominantly black population; a kind of priesthood without portfolio, as it were, whose grassroots appeal to the popular imagination provides a therapeutic release for seditious grievances against the Castro regime.

"We *babalaos* are no longer as misunderstood as we once were," Victor Betancourt concludes with a fine sense of euphemistic subtlety. "Our contribution to the welfare of the people is currently being reassessed in a more favorable light."

He curls his wrists and waves his hands in an inimitable Cuban gesture. At that instant the lights flash back on at the Center for African Folk Culture in Santiago and the air conditioner purrs soothingly.

3.

SWINGING A SHORT RED hooked stick, the color of *Chango*, god of fire, Maritza—pivoting unsteadily on her heels—collars each of us in the room, and in a hoarse, squawky voice, the voice of the African spirit Francisco, predicts what's in store for our future lives. Her face hovering a scant few inches from mine looks more like a mask than a face. Stiff, rigid, the eyes compressed to slits; her pupils have disappeared behind a smear of white. Her mouth puckers and twitches. Her voice honks like a tenor saxophone. I must be careful when I drive a car, Francisco ventriloquizes through her throat. I may be having surgery soon. I have enemies, especially in regard to my work.



Amid the confusion the woman with the henna hair crumples a chalky substance made of egg whites into Maritza's hand. Maritza then makes another circuit of the room, marking each of our foreheads to prevent us from becoming similarly possessed. Then, reeling and tottering, she smears the stuff on a coconut. Pumping the coconut like a beach ball, she circles the room one more time, thunking it against our foreheads and shoulders, our chests, wrists, and stomachs.

Maritza drops to the floor with a thud, knocking over calabashes brimming with water and rum. Another woman calmly mops up the mess. Flat on her belly, Maritza then shoves the chalked coconut toward a side door with her forehead and nose. Groping like a tortoise, she nudges the coconut through the door and around the corner into a tiny, rectangular room. An altar bristling with sticks, shells, bones, and knives leans against the back wall. Talking and cajoling, her mother and friend accompany her the entire way. They straddle her prostrate body, muss her hair, rub her shoulders soothingly, steer her by the back of her soiled blouse.

Gasping for breath, sides heaving, Maritza sprawls face down in front of the altar. The woman in the blue sweater sprinkles gunpowder on the flat blade of a machete and lights it. The gunpowder ignites with a sharp pouf! Acrid smoke fills the air. Somebody thrusts a cup of rum into my hand. "Drink!" a voice hisses. "Drink!"

Gunpowder sprinkled along the machete's flat blade ignites again with a flurry of sparks and flame. I think of other ceremonies I have witnessed. I think of the mesmeric drumming, the metallic clack of cowbells, the sinuous motions of the dancers in the neighborhood clubs of Santiago pantomiming the tragedy of their ancestors, brought to the New World in manacles and condemned to a brutal life cutting sugar cane for their Spanish masters. How in the teeth of relentless persecution the African deities were overlaid with a glittery veneer of Catholic saints so that underground, deep in the woods, far from prying eyes, worship of the real gods and goddesses could continue uninterrupted.

I think of Tatu, a popular *santero* who operates out of a spacious, white-walled temple in a barrio in South Havana. Tatu is a vigorous and kindly man in his late seventies. His cheeks are stubbled with the ghostly sheen of a white beard. His half-crossed eyes give his thin, ascetic face an inwardly focused look. Tourists come to Tatu's place to watch dances and participate in *asientos* (initiation ceremonies). For the privilege, they bring gifts and leave donations, which are carefully collected and tabulated by Tatu's wife.

Local barrio residents appear regularly to be attended by Tatu and his assistants. The temple consists of two rooms: a sitting room just off the street, furnished with a couch, chairs, two new Japanese TV sets. An adjacent room features two formal altars, one to *Chango*, the other to *Oshun*. So powerful is Tatu's reputation that he is sought after by important politicians for private audiences.

In 1993 Roberto Robaina, then a minor department chief, visited Tatu to see what the sage might predict about his professional future. Bright, personable, ambitious, Robaina was eager to move up the bureaucratic ladder, nearer to the pinnacle of power occupied by Fidel and his brother Raul. Speaking through Tatu, the spirits revealed that Robaina would lose his job, but that it would not matter all that much. Robaina did lose the job, only to be appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs a short time later.

The anomaly of such a phenomenon occurring in one of the last Marxist enclaves remaining in the world is baffling to contemplate. Here is a country where, on the surface at least, everything is planned, all material resources are carefully allocated, personal freedoms are subordinated to the common good, and fidelity to the revolution is the first and foremost obligation of every citizen.

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But the true pulse of the Cuban people cannot be measured by statistical indices or the fulsome rhetoric of Fidel Castro. I think of the homes and apartments I visited in Havana, with their closets and side rooms dedicated to the African *orishas*, and I begin to realize that Cuba is a complicated place, infinitely more complicated than anyone knows, certainly more complicated than the Soviet-Marxist-satellite stereotype ascribed to it these past 35 years by a vengeful and unforgiving U.S. government.

I think of a tall, beefy, powerfully built man named Carlos with whom I spent an evening leafing through the pages of his collection of *Bohemia* magazine (Cuba's equivalent to *Life* magazine) from the 1950s and 60s. Standing in the living room of his cramped apartment, we viewed photograph after photograph of bearded guerrillas hiding out in the jungles of the Oriente and henchmen of the detested Fulgencio Batista being summarily executed by rifle fire. Carlos, a dedicated revolutionary, nodded his head and grunted approval at each photo showing high-powered bullets ripping through the chests of doomed henchmen. (Those same bullets kicking up clouds of grainy dust off the stone walls, against which—sometimes blindfolded, sometimes not—the henchmen had been propped.)

A few steps away, in a tiny closet wedged between the living room and kitchen, Carlos maintains an altar bedizened with rooster feathers and animal bones, festooned with multi-colored ribbons, impaled with sticks, knives, and kitchen implements. The altar is dedicated to *palo mayombe*, a practice linked to the African Bantu tribe, popularly associated with witchcraft and sorcery. Several times a day, with gusto and delight, Carlos drenches the altar with mouthfuls of rum and blows smoke from a pungent cigar against the objects poking off the cluttered profile.

In the courtyard of the two-story *solar* where Carlos lives with his wife and daughter stands a thick-trunked *ceiba* tree with spreading branches that spiral high over the topmost floor. Laundry flaps from the lines and wires strung between the branches. The lumpy roots protruding from the trunk are littered with coins, bones, photographs, ribbons, scraps of food. The tree dominates the courtyard, casting its shade into every corner.

The *ceiba*, or silk-cotton tree, is sacred to the practice of *santeria*. So powerful is the *ceiba* it rarely is struck by lightning, even in a violent storm. Legend has it that during the Flood, the *ceiba* was the only tree that the rising water failed to inundate. Every part of the tree is holy: leaves, bark, trunk, roots, even the shade it casts.

4.

A HAND CURLS AROUND my wrist, dissolving my thoughts, bringing me back to the chaotic scene in the tiny room of the stuffy apartment building in the heart of Central Havana. The hand belongs to Lily, a schoolteacher, a gentle woman, barely five feet tall. Lily has a sweet, pensive face capable of relaxing into the warmest expressions of affection and good humor. She wears a brown dress, belted at the waist, decorated with tiny yellow flowers. "We have to go now," she says.

Go? Now? Why?

Squeezing my wrist and elbow, Lily steers me down the long, dimly-lit hall, away from Maritza, still writhing and blubbering, away from her mother and the woman with the bright henna hair, away from the *santero* and his assistant, away from the messy temple reeking of rum, sweat, and scorched gunpowder, away from the altar with its double-bladed ax prominently displayed in honor of *Chango*, god of thunder, lightning, and fire.

The street outside is damp from an afternoon shower. As I follow Lily across to the opposite curb, my shoe skids across the remains of a dead rat. Traffic is light; there aren't many automobiles in Havana these days—instead, I hear the hiss of bicycle tires against the wet pavement. The last orange rays in the western sky are smudged by stringy clots of oily smoke from the flare stacks of an antiquated refinery located on the east side of Havana harbor.

My head reels. I have nothing to compare this to in my own life. The messiness of the ritual, its stunning immediacy, the clamor and confusion, the overpowering physicality, the intimate personal involvement, are all alien to the starched, orderly, genteel Protestant liturgy I grew up with in the U.S.

Lily reaches back and tugs at my sleeve. Her brother has bought a chicken on the black market and plans to cook it tonight in his apartment in Old Havana, along with his monthly allotment of rice, in honor of the gringo who has braved the displeasure of his own government to come to Cuba to see how things are in the waning days of Fidel Castro's great revolutionary experiment.

We turn a corner and emerge onto a wide boulevard, flanked with stone benches, divided by a spacious median shaded by laurel trees. Before the revolution, the boulevard was lined with fashionable shops where wealthy Cubans bought clothes imported from Europe and the United States. Today the few shops that remain display a pathetic array of cheap goods from former Soviet-bloc countries: plastic shoes, polyester shirts, crinoline dresses, sleeveless blouses, imitation-leather purses.

A crowd of people, fatigue marking their faces, resentment bubbling like a sour broth under the collective mask of mannerly resignation, waits patiently on the corner for a bus. The workday is over, and those with jobs are on their way home—weary, sullen, hungry, out of sorts. Whether the bus shows up or not is problematical. Whatever, it is certain to be packed. Two men in blue uniforms, Ministry of Interior police, armed with revolvers and night sticks, stand at the head of the line to make sure everyone takes his proper turn.

The lovely old city seems hopelessly shabby and dark. The tourist hotels at the edge of Central Park, fueled by their own generators, blaze like cruise ships stranded on a

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ROBERT LIETZ

FUENTES

Her pelvis initials smoke, panache
on a devalued currency. Kim from K.C.,
"Show-me State," she tells us,
makes a smudge of her red hair under
blacklight, strobe. And O she squats
like Yogi, opens her satin cup
for bucks and kisses a ring of patrons,
horseplaying, starting a loins-up
shudder doubly in me, my eyes fixed desiring
and desiring out. We'd driven
from Greeley toward Cheyenne, alternate
way to Laramie, the Fuentes lecture
finished early, Bill promising our surprise
at the Colorado-Wyoming gate.

Fuentes, the vigorous and sad mesh
of hemisphere haunting us, hegemony
re-thought and cadenced
to bear a sorry flesh toward hope:
Remember the future; imagine
the past, he prodded. Then chill, the mud
and puddle-mapped lot, the hoots
of regulars, what speech comes to,
a tidal succession of watermarks
like studied moans:

"Sweet dreams are made of this..."
Seductress, step-mother, and raged cat:
She runs her top silk over the heads
of men up front. Think what drowning
they do for this, in this
bar/border light south of Cheyenne's line,
nexus we just escape, sixty miles
to drive, figuring Bud and snap of bone,
the tease of trimmed hair fringing
flag-colored cloth, clues of fingers
giving rise to nipple, cock.

Fuentes (wiping your lenses
before you speak, say what you've said
in how many ballrooms): say
what our drive means, the rain chilling
to slick glaze as we drive west
out of Cheyenne, and what she means,
candle spent as sighings trip our beer-dry lips.
Explain this unexpected shattering,
as of lampglass, when she's left us,
flecks of colored glass set afloat,
glittering in our beer and glittering
on the sweaters of her patrons,
and, deeply matched, these governings
smoke-veined eyes have read.

coral reef. As a child, escorted by my parents, I came here, back when Havana was the wicked playground of the western hemisphere, renowned for its nightclubs, raunchy floorshows, and wide-open gambling. We stayed at one of those hotels by the park that tonight glow with artifical warmth through the layers of penury and neglect that mantle the city like a lid. I remember the lights, the swirl of traffic, the rhythmic energy, the balsalmic air, the perfume smell of the trees, the terrible squalor lurking a few blocks away. A middle-aged man, I have returned, against the wishes of my own government, to rekindle those memories, and to a certain degree I have, though despite their poignancy for me, they have no relevance or meaning to Cuba today. They belong to another era, and for many more good reasons than bad they can never be resuscitated. They are trapped forever in the amber of personal memory, sealed in the honey glow of nostalgic affection, beyond the power of history or politics to violate or corrupt.

Lily presses my hand. I quicken my step. Savvy and wise, she steers me between clusters of noisy urchins, sultry hookers, muggers eager to target a shining white face.

"Lily!" I whisper.

"Hurry!" she replies. The touch of her hand is steady and sure.

We pass the Floridita bar with its air of faded elegance. A doorman in a tuxedo two sizes too big for his shrunken chest and stick-like legs blows smoke rings against the glass window of the front door. The moonless night is like a fathomless crack into which the city seems poised to disappear like a vintage aircraft into the depths of the Bermuda Triangle. Despite the shortages, the complexity of their problems, the people astound me with the toughness of their resolve. Faint but unmistakable, borne on the ripple of a moist breeze wafting all the way from the Malecon, floats the brash, tangy, fecund scent of the sea. *Oshun*. Beautiful and flirtatious. Venus of the African continent. Goddess of water, love, and hope. □

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The Richest Man

A Story by Ha Jin

In our town the richest man was Li Wan. He, once an army doctor, was demobilized in 1963. Since then, he had been a physician in the Commune Clinic, where his wife also worked, as a nurse. He had a nickname, Ten Thousand, which referred to the amount he had in the bank. Years before, his nickname had been different and people had called him Thousand, since at that time his savings had not yet reached five figures.

Li was a miser. The whole town talked about how stingy he was. There were many anecdotes of him: he used soda ash for toothpaste and soap; he made a rule for his wife that she must not put in more than four tiny dried shrimps when she cooked noodles; instead of buying a packet, he always bought four or five cigarettes at a time; he stored a lot of corn husks at home as toilet paper. Of course, frugality is a virtue. Everybody understands that, just as the last page of a household's grain booklet reminds us:

> From every meal you save a mouthful,
> In a year you will have many a bushel.

But with his monthly salary of 110 yuan, almost twice a common worker's, Li ought to be openhanded. He shouldn't have haggled with egg and vegetable vendors in the marketplace as if he were buying an ox, and once in a while he ought to do his neighbors a small favor, like giving a kid a pencil on Children's Day or an old man a stalk of sugar cane at the Mid-Fall Festival. No, he had never done anything like that. He had yet to learn how to give. That is indeed a difficult thing for a wealthy man to do.

In addition, few men can be rich without being arrogant. Li Wan was no exception. Though niggardly by nature, he could be extravagant. He had the best fowling piece—the only double-barreled gun in town, a German camera, and a Yellow River motorcycle. There was another man in Dismount Fort who owned a motorcycle, but that man, a welder in the Fertilizer Plant, was a fool. He rode that thing only for vanity and told all women who didn't know him that he was an engineer. In Li's case, these pieces of property showed substantial wealth. Li allowed nobody to touch his motorcycle and never gave anyone a ride.

Without the distinction between the high and the low, there would be no sorrow; without the difference between the rich and the poor, everyone could be contented. How wise is that ancient saying? The whole town hated Li, whose stinginess and extravagance made people's lives unbearable. They all agreed that Li deserved to be childless.

When the Cultural Revolution broke out, however, the two most powerful mass associations in town, The Team of Maoism and The League of Mao Zedong Thought, tried to enroll Li, not because he was rich but because he had once been a revolutionary officer. Besides, he was a doctor, useful to a mass organization, especially when it resorted to cudgels, swords, guns, grenades and mines against its enemy. Li refused to join either of the associations, and his arrogance outraged the enthusiastic masses. As Chairman Mao instructs: "If you are not a friend of the people, you are an enemy of the people." Naturally some men on the League of Mao Zedong Thought began to think how to punish Li Wan.

That was not easy, because Li was from a poor-peasant family, was a Party member and seemed to be red inside and out. Nonetheless they kept an eye on him and assigned a young man, Tong Fei, to prepare a file and collect material against him. While the whole town was busy making revolution, how could they tolerate such a man who would ride a motorcycle, with a shiny fowling piece across his back, to the mountains and hunt pheasants every weekend?

One afternoon, Tong came into the league's headquarters and announced excitedly to the vice-director Jiao Luming and several other men, "We got Li Thousand this time."

He put on the table a white paper ball and began unwrapping it. Then a broken Mao button emerged in front of them. They were shocked to see the Chairman's neck severed from his smiling face. "Where did you get this?" Jiao asked in surprise.

"Li Thousand dumped it into the trash heap near Victory Restaurant. I saw him do it with my own eyes," Tong said proudly.

This was a hideous crime. They decided to denounce Li Wan that very evening.

Li left work late that day because of treating an injured stonecutter at the clinic. Six men were waiting for him before his house. The moment he appeared at the street corner, they went up to him, saying, "We are here to take you to a meeting."

"What meeting?" Li licked his upper lip.

"A denunciation meeting for you."

"For me? I'm not a reactionary element, am I?"

"Of course you are. Stop pretending. We all know you smashed the button of Chairman Mao."

"No, I didn't! It's made of porcelain. Dropped to the cement floor by accident."

It was no use arguing. They grabbed him and brought him to Carter Inn, where the league's headquarters was. With an upright body, I'm not scared of a slant shadow, Li thought. He had seen actions in the army and knew a few top leaders in the province. Why should he be afraid of this troop of shrimps and crabs?

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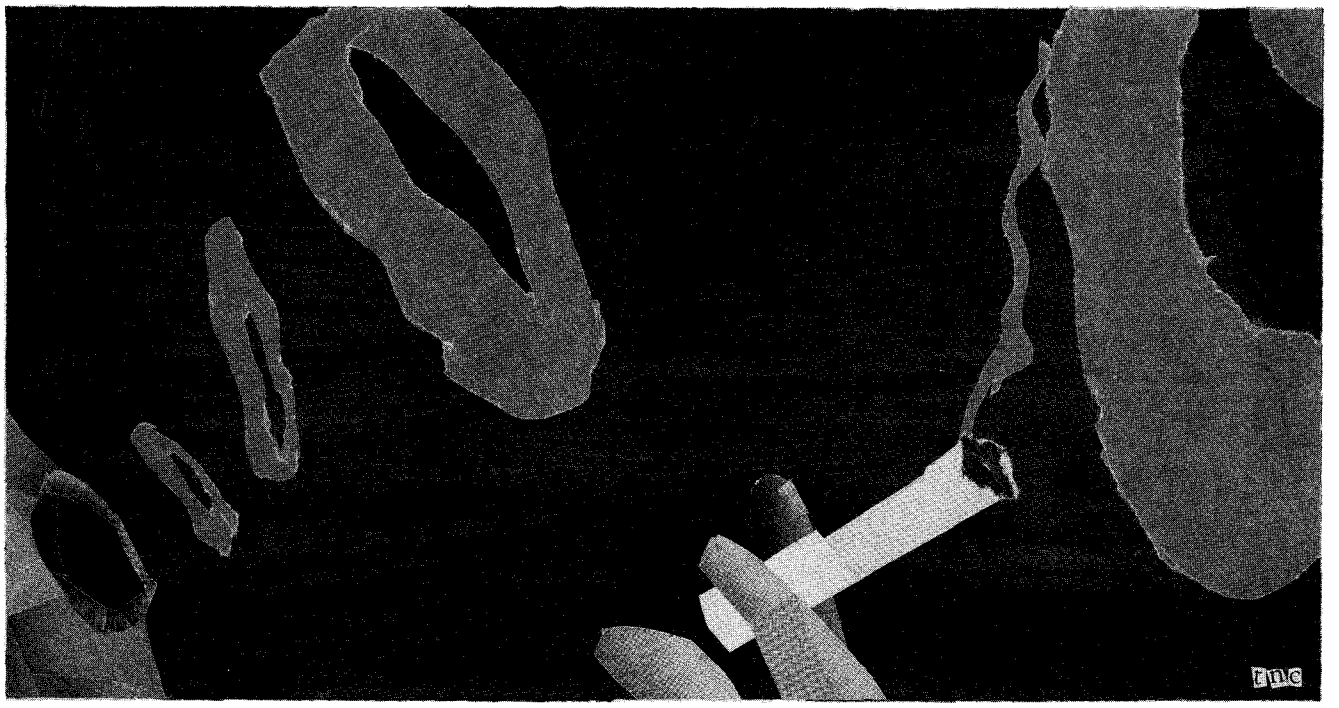

TOM COCOTOS

So he followed them calmly and even smoked a self-rolled cigarette on the way.

They brought him into the dining room, where about a hundred people were waiting. In the storm of slogans Li was taken to the front and was made to wear a placard that carried the large words in black ink: "Current Counter-Revolutionary."

The director of the league Lin Shou announced, "Comrades, we found this in a trash heap today." He raised the broken button. "Criminal Li Wan committed the crime. He must have hated our Great Leader all the time."

"Down with counter-revolutionary Li Thousand," a middle-aged woman shouted in the crowd, and people followed her and raised their fists. They realized Li differed from them not only in wealth but also in outlook. This further convinced them of his wickedness.

But Li was not easy to be frightened. He gave them a contemptuous smile and said loudly, "You called me a counter-revolutionary? What a joke. When I risked my life fighting the American ghosts in Korea, where were you? What have you contributed to our country and the Party? Let me tell you, I was awarded a merit citation twice. With these hands I've saved hundreds of revolutionaries, who are still my friends." He threw up his hands that looked like a pair of small fans.

"'Don't rest on past glory, make new contributions,'" someone cried out, quoting Chairman Mao.

"Take this." Jiao slapped Li on the face and said through his teeth, "Go on bragging, I'll crack your skull. Damn you. You're a current landlord."

"Down with current landlord Li Wan," a man shouted, and the crowd followed him, shouting in unison.

Li was stunned by the slapping and the new phrase of which he had never heard; and he kept his Mongolian eyes low. Yet he managed to say, "I'm not a criminal. It was an accident. I wore the button when I was at work. It fell to the cement floor by itself as I was washing my hands."

"Who saw it?" Lin asked.

"Nobody, but I swear on my Party membership that every word I said is true."

"No, he's lying," several people said. Li's calm voice enraged them. Under such a circumstance another man would drop to his knees and beg for mercy, but Li, who had never been to a denunciation, had no idea of the propriety.

Then four men came in with long cudgels and ropes in their hands. They moved to the front and stood on both sides. "Will you admit your crime or not?" Jiao asked.

Though frightened, Li said, "I've nothing to admit. I love Chairman Mao and would sacrifice my life for him. How could I hate him? He saved my clan. My parents and grandparents all worked for landlords as farm-hands. He is our Great Savior! How could I hate him?"

"Stop pretending," Director Lin cried. "Facts speak louder than words. Show us how you love Chairman Mao. Damn you."

"Yes, show us."

"Show us how."

At once the room turned quiet, all eyes fixed on Li's fat face, as if they were waiting for him to sing a passionate song, or enact a Loyalty Dance, or do anything that could display that lofty feeling. Outside, a horse started neighing and drummed its hooves on the ground.

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Li straightened up a little and smiled. Clearing his throat, he said, "All right, let me tell you something. Four years ago I sent some food coupons, a hundred *jin* all together, to Chairman Mao. You all starved in the famine, didn't you? Me too. But unlike you, I ate a few mouthfuls less at every meal and saved the food coupons for Chairman Mao. Because I love him and didn't want him to starve like us. This was absolutely true. You can check it with my former army unit. If one word is untrue, you behead me."

The crowd was thrown into a turmoil. A lot of them couldn't help laughing, saying what an idiot Li was and how come he had thought Chairman Mao needed his food coupons, but nobody would say he didn't love the Chairman. The leaders of the league were confused by the sudden quirk, too. And they couldn't stop chuckling.

"Be quiet. Attention please," Director Lin shouted through his hands encircling his mouth.

To the crowd's surprise, Hou Mengtian, a young teacher in the Middle School, went up to the front. At the sight of this short man in glasses, Li quivered, since he remembered that this man had once wanted to borrow his German camera, but he had refused his request. Hou turned to the audience and said, "Don't be taken in by him. That's also a counter-revolutionary act." He turned to Li. "You think you're mighty smart and nobody can see through you, don't you? It's obvious that you sent the coupons to blaspheme Chairman Mao. You meant to say to him, 'Look, we are all starving because of your leadership.'"

"No," Li yelled, "I starved because I loved Chairman Mao!"

"See, how he used the words?" Hou said to the crowd. "He's blaming Chairman Mao. He starved because he loved Chairman Mao. If he hadn't loved him, he wouldn't have starved."

People remained silent, their faces showing confusion and eagerness. "Damn you, egg of a turtle!" Li cursed the young man.

"Watch your filthy mouth," Tong Fei cried.

"I can prove my point," Hou spoke again. "Four years ago he sent the coupons, then the next year he came here. He thought the leaders in Beijing couldn't understand his trick? They saw through him. That's why he, a doctor with the rank of a captain, was discharged and sent here working in our small clinic."

Li looked blank and began trembling. It was as though he were hit on the head by a hammer, too dazed to respond to what was going on. Tears trickled down his cheeks.

"Comrades," Hou spoke more confidently, "I suggest that we send someone to his army unit to find out the truth."

"Oh, we were told Chairman Mao had the same ration! Oh, oh," Li moaned and burst out sobbing, too overwhelmed to say anything clearly. People were finally convinced that he was indeed a wolf in human skin. Slogans and curses surged one after another. The men with cudgels fell on him.

"Oh, spare my life, ouch! I'm a counter-revolutionary, all right. Don't beat me!"

"Beat him!"

"Skin him!"

That night Li was jailed in the stable behind the inn, and a group of men went to his home and confiscated all the valuables and his bankbook. From the next day on, the motorcycle and the camera became public property and everybody in the league could use them (that was how dozens of men learned to ride a motorcycle); the fowling piece was committed to the care of the league's armed platoon. Of course, a lot of men enjoyed firing it when hunting pheasants and hares in the mountains.

A month later Li Wan was sent to Sea Nest Village to be reformed. Lucky for him, he didn't labor in the fields. He served as a barefoot doctor there for five years, but without being paid. In the meantime, he wrote over a hundred letters to the Provincial Administration and Shenyang Military Region, asking for rehabilitation.

In the beginning of the sixth year, his case was finally clarified. Flighty as he had been, he was by no means a counter-revolutionary. He was called back from the village. All the confiscated property was returned to him, but the motorcycle was already worn out and wouldn't start, the camera's lens was missing, and one of the barrels of the fowling piece had been blasted. Yet, he got richer, because the bankbook was given back to him; in addition, he received a large sum of salary for his five years' work in the village. All at once his savings doubled. On the very day when he deposited the money in the People's Bank, the clerks there began spreading the news in town. Within a week, Li's nickname was changed to Ten Thousand, of which he seemed to be proud. How unjust the Lord of Heaven was! Li became the richest man again. Just the interest was more than a worker could make. This is exploitation, isn't it? everyone wondered.

Li simply despised the whole town, unable to get along with anybody. He bought a new motorcycle and a new camera—which was made in Shanghai, though. He had given up hunting but taken to fishing, so he bought himself two steel fishing poles and a large nylon net. These days he was thinking of buying a rubber boat. Still he wouldn't lend the camera to anyone; still he would give nobody a ride; still he would haggle with vendors in the marketplace and with hawkers on the streets. People went on talking about his stinginess and arrogance. In secret, some were looking forward to another political movement. □

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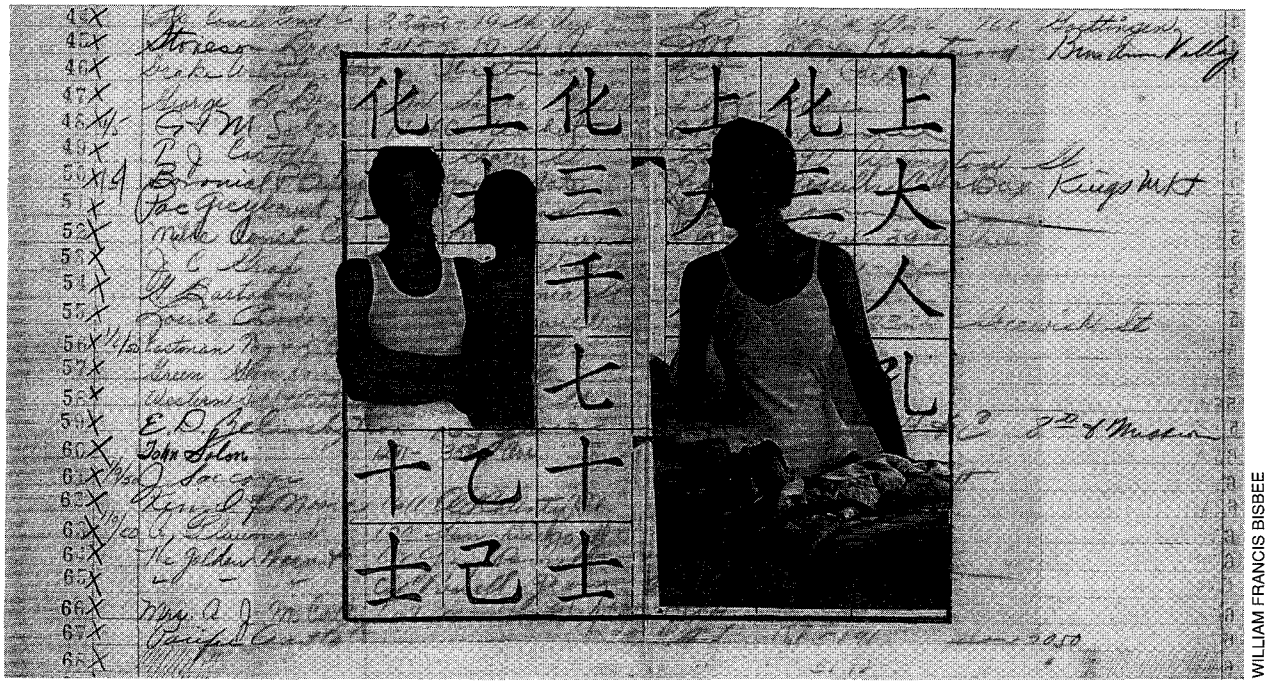

WILLIAM FRANCIS BISBEE

A Story by Carolyn Parkhurst

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Listen: this is the important part. This is what came into my mind this morning when I held the invitation in my hands and I felt everything in me grow quick. You and I were at a party—we were graduating, we were at the edge. It was May, it was evening, it was chilly. We were not there together, we were no longer friends. But I said I was cold and you put your jacket around my shoulders. For me, this was the beginning. This was a glimpse of all I did not know.

There are two lines drawn between you and me, tough and transparent as fishing-wire, and I am always tripping over them. One, you were at my twelfth birthday party, we were best friends, little girls, sleeping over. One day you did not talk to me anymore. Not a word. But I kept up with you. I saw you as you moved through cafeteria lines and across the stages of school plays, and sometime after my fifteenth birthday I saw your movements change. And this is the second line that ties you to me; it is wound about me tight and cutting, and it is the stronger of the two because it is the one that you do not know about. There was a girl we both knew, and, separately and together, one of us silently and one of us in whispered rumors, we loved her. I had seen you walking home from school together. I had seen a heart in the girls' bathroom with your initials. How can I explain it? It was everything.

I knew what was going on. When we were twelve. It was happening all around us. Twelve-year-old girls know a lot about cruelty. It is not a good age. There is a code of seats not saved and invitations not issued that adults do not like to admit they understand. One day you did not say you liked my dress. You looked me up and down and did not say a word. And once you hung up the phone without saying "See you tomorrow." I knew what was coming.

But I was not prepared for your heart and hers. I was not prepared for the initials and the jacket. For my self splitting open as you walked down the hall together. No. That was a surprise.

You were no mystery to me. The vigil I kept from the corners of rooms you and she watched each other across, I did not keep this vigil for you. I knew you, I knew what you were capable of. She was the one forever unattainable. She was the one I was always looking for, in every room I entered. She was the one I could not talk to my friends about, the one whose name could not pass my lips. She was the one whose picture, cut from the school newspaper, I kept hidden. Tell me about her. What she was like. How did she feel, pressed up next to you? That is what I will never know. What was the smell of her, how did your clothes smell after she had worn them? Did you go to movies with her, did you take her hand? I cannot picture you inexperienced, not knowing at first how to move with one another. I cannot imagine you hurting each other by jabbing a finger too suddenly. I cannot think you hesitant to take her in your mouth. But at fifteen? There is such worldliness at fifteen. You seemed to me as if you knew it all. Prove me wrong. Tell me about your learning.

How did it start? When did you first touch her? Were you friends, sleeping over, like girls do? Like we did? Did you have to be quiet so her family or yours wouldn't hear? It seems to me now that I spent all my years of high school thinking this, wanting to know. I can see it so many different ways. You were staying at her house. You had gone to bed, together, a double bed. I had a double bed. When friends slept over, we shared a bed just like lovers do, but not once did I reach out from my side of the bed and touch a young girl in the dark. Not once did one of them pull me toward her and surprise me by pressing her face to my neck. I couldn't imagine how you took something so familiar to me and changed it into something so impossible. My head swims thinking about it. So you were in bed, the lights were off, it was dark. It was early, a school night, or late, a weekend. You were talking, lying there together talking, lying close enough to touch, but not touching. Here is where my memory stops and my imagination hesitates before the leap, the great task of inventing you. Did you take her hand while laughing, or did the sudden silence keep you both awake, wondering? Did you touch her breast first, or her face? The back of her lovely neck, always so close to me when I sat behind her in class? Tell me about your first kiss, light and heavy upon your lips. I want to know about your tongue, and hers. I am dizzy with it. Who leaned or rolled or inched toward whom? Was it summer with sticky sheets and an open window? Winter with warm blankets and hands at first cold? Did you tremble, either or both of you, as you reached out into this? Were you frightened? I want to know what you ate for breakfast the next day and how you acted with all her family, or yours, surrounding you. Making you not alone together anymore. Did you call your friends and tell them, like you would about a boy you met at a dance, someone you touched in darkness while music played? Was it any different from that?

Or. Maybe you had been talking about attraction, about the curve of women's breasts. About how you looked at girls at school, about how it would feel to kiss another girl on the lips. Maybe this was a bold experiment for the two of you, maybe you threw yourselves together out of curiosity or daring or boredom. I would rather it were not so. I would rather see you as acting upon months of building up. A hollowness within when you looked at her. This I can understand.

Maybe I am not seeing it right. Maybe I expect too

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much. I have heard stories about young girls rubbing their bodies together like kindling, "pretending" they were with boys. Calling out the names of male rock stars and eighth-grade handsome rebels, even as they plucked at each other's nipples and dipped into one another with purple-nailed fingers. I do not think that was you. I cannot see you as anything but aware.

In any case, with or without premeditation, with or without the aid of darkness or vodka stolen and replaced with water, you touched. This I know from writing on walls and from stories told by friends of mine who knew friends of yours. What was changed? Having touched. How secretive were you, how scheming? No one wonders about girls sleeping over. I'll bet it never even crossed their minds. Girls with boyfriends had to invent excuses, had to find empty cars, had to listen for parents' footsteps. But you two, it was assumed, it was expected, slept in a bed together under your parents' roof. On sheets your parents bought.

I watched you together at school with such sadness, such impossible longing. I heard you call her by a nickname no one else used. And once, it must have been your birthday, I saw her give you a present wrapped in blue paper. Someone spoke my name, I had to turn away, and I never saw what was inside. I never saw. What might I have learned, what would the peeling back of that paper have revealed? What mundane and mysterious object would I now carry with me to hold up next to every gift I receive? You were models for me. So this is how women are together. It seems as if I have spent my whole life trying to catch up to the two of you. I still cannot imagine such boldness. She had dark eyes. She sang in a band. People knew. How did you dare write your initials on the wall in the bathroom? I had classes with her; I couldn't speak. Maybe one day you and I will meet somewhere, not at a school reunion, not here in this city. Someplace else. I will look for you whenever I am out of town, whenever I am most and least likely to run into you. And then we'll talk about all this, and I will be eased for a while. How did she sleep, what was her daily life? I know nothing of this. What made her laugh? You walked streets, you rode subways with her. You went somewhere together. Help me to see.

I look for her, I expect her, in every lover I have. I wait for her to catch me off guard. I spoke to her maybe six times. I did not know her, but I knew of her. I gathered and hoarded things she said, things I learned about her, as if they might save me. I knew her birthday and her middle name. I knew her voice was clear when she raised it in class, and I knew her face turned pink when she bent herself over a test paper. I knew that if I sat close to her, I might hear her hum under her breath. I knew that she did not run to get in out of a sudden rain but turned her face up to it and closed her eyes. Did you ever see me watching you, the two of you together? Did you think I saw you as a curiosity or an affront? You were air for me to breathe. I lay awake at night trying to take it all in. The enormity. Now, I would think, a thrill within me, they might be together now. Did you talk about boys together, or girls? Did you name yourselves? You were so easy with each other. I could not hear your names without losing my sense of balance. You let me glimpse all I did not know.

It all comes down to this: I have lain in bed with you, and you have lain in bed with her. Whatever the differences in these beds and in what we did in them, there is still this. Tell me. Did you suck her neck hard, were you rough in your passion, did you mark each other in ways that were hard to hide? Inconceivable to me, the permission you had, the right, to say her name, to touch her hair. To meet her eyes. To be in a room with her. This is why you are precious to me, this is why you stay with me: you have been in a room with her, you have touched her hair. What words did you find or make for what you were doing? Were you making love, so weighty, dragging with it darkened afternoon rooms in movies our parents liked to watch, or were you fooling around, easy and inconsequential as laughing at a lunchroom table? What did you make of all the songs and movies and afterschool specials that told us how teenagers fall in love? What did you find there for yourselves? I do not think you held hands in the hallway, ever. Did you give her something of yours to wear on a chain around her neck? Did you sip from one ice cream soda with two straws? Who wrote whose name in the margin of her notebook? I know about the heart, I know about your initials. Did she put her jacket around your shoulders when it was nighttime and you were cold? Tell me about her favorite foods, tell me about the space between her breasts. I imagine her whispering to you. She must have, some time, whispered. Which words, which places made her lower her voice, and what did she sound like then? Did you treat each other badly? What patterns were created, which games played? Tell me of bloodshed and lovers' quarrels. Give me dirt, give me damp earth to trap under my fingernails. Something I can touch. What did she tell you in the dark, and what in the light? Tell me. Whisper. She is always in my background. She hovers at edges. I will never hear her say my name.

I have lived with this; it is the biggest secret I ever kept. You marked me in ways that were hard to hide. I had friends, I went to the prom, I wore a pink dress. I lived a life. But. Three years. Awake in the night.

(Once, I was walking down the hall, and it was empty, and she was walking toward me, and I knew I could look up, I could smile, I could speak to her, and she was coming closer, and I did not know what to do,

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my eyes were on the floor, and she was past me.)

I was wide awake. I was never at rest. Alarmed by how deeply I could feel. At my worst, I almost could not imagine taking her in my arms. She was that far beyond me. It was all so hazy—a jacket around shoulders, that was new to me, that was revelation. But on my best days, I built us worlds.

Let me explain about the jacket: it drew me in, it gathered me to you. It made me a part of what you had with her. I felt the denim on my arms, and I understood what it was to share a secret with someone. I knew how it felt to walk on your way to meet someone on a day so cold you could see your breath. I knew about angry silence on a telephone line, and I knew the tiny pleasure of touching someone's hand with one finger in a dark and crowded theater. Your hands did not rest upon my shoulders for long as you made this gesture, so small to you I'm sure you have forgotten it, but it was long enough for me to understand the possibility of this thing you and she shared. It was long enough for me to see how I might, one day, be a part of it.

I admit to telling my friends about the two of you; I admit to reducing you to gossip. Did you hear, I asked, and do you know, and I watched their faces turn mean and gleeful. Do you understand? It was the only way I could mention her name; it was the only way I could release what I held so tightly. I let you out slowly, like air from a balloon whose neck I gripped in a stranglehold. Not once did I let go completely. Not once did the balloon fly crazily about the room.

I cannot catch my breath.

If she passed notes to you in class, what did they say?

Tell me tender stories I almost cannot stand to hear.

I have missed you.

Tell me what scared her. Tell me about her breathing, when she was sleeping, when she was excited. Tell me not just about the first time, but about the second time and the third. Tell me about all the time. Did she sing to you with that voice like cool water? That voice like a touch? Like a hand on me. I heard her sing and so much was clear. So much opened.

I will always have this. It makes me up. I am made up of the two of you walking home together after school. It is too much of me.

Who cared more about whom? Who cried when who left? I will try to be impartial; I will try not to take her side. Tell me about her meannesses, the ways she hurt you. Tell me the irreparable damage done. Tell me the things you cannot stand to think of, even now. Help me to see.

Which moments bring her to you now? When does she catch up with you? We have shared something, you and I. Does her name cut through you, unexpected in the aisles of supermarkets or bouncing off a lovely neck in front of you on the subway, as often as it does me? Are there mornings, are there nights that wake you from your daily life with the faint smell of her hair suddenly all around you? Do you try to forget her? Is she a story that you tell after a couple of drinks? Do you laugh her off?

Tell me how she comes to you, if she comes. Do you see her leaning over you in your bed, her breasts close to your face? In front of people, singing a song that has not left you since? Turning to you once in class, offering a wide smile like flowers? Or—what do I know—sitting on a beach, maybe, digging in sand with her toes, or leaning against a cold stone wall, crying in the street during your last and biggest fight? I cannot begin to think what you think of when you think of her. We have not shared so much after all.

Tell me about her thigh high between yours. Tell me about holding her in your hands.

I do not want you to think I have not moved on. I have touched faces that do not remind me of hers, and the lovers I have had, the flesh-and-bone lovers that have moved within me in a way far less ghostly than she did, they have loved me back. And if I was not young enough to draw hearts on bathroom walls, I have not regretted it much. But you, you and she together, you have not left me. I know how to count to ten, and I knew this time was coming. I have imagined dressing up and entering a room, standing close to you again even though my back is turned and I am talking to someone else. My body awake with nerves, I would be watching doors for her as I have done for so long, and from across the room, I would be tied to you with wire you would not see. But this morning, when I held the invitation in my hands, I could feel the weight of my name pinned to my chest, and I knew I could not face such ache and such fullness. Everything I have done since, how far I have come, none of it will matter. I will be right back there, and I do not think I could stand it. I would not be able to breathe.

I hope you told her she was beautiful. I hope you told her about her eyes and her voice and the way she laughed. I hope she knew the way she could fill a room just by walking into it. I hope you told her the way she could make you ache inside, the way your skin could tingle until it almost hurt, because these are the things I can never say.

I am not finished with this. Sometimes I feel I have barely begun.

I will look for you wherever girls walk hand in hand. Whenever the evening air is cool. Because I do not know what you have become, I do not know where to look for you. So I will be looking everywhere.

Do you see? I have always been listening for her name. □

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Call of the What?

A Story by Nancy Lord

Buck, Bucky, Buckaroo did not read the newspapers, and so he didn't know about the government's plans for shooting wolves. The wolves ate caribou, but people ate caribou, too, and when there were more people who wanted caribou than there were caribou to be taken, it was plain to the government that the wolves would have to take fewer. The way for wolves to take fewer caribou was for them to *be* fewer—that is, wolves would have to be killed.

On a snowless gray morning at the start of winter, Buck stood on the sidewalk outside a sky-filling government building in Anchorage. All around him people in parkas and knit hats waved signs at passing motorists. The signs said *Stop the Wolf Kill, Control Hunters Not Wolves,* and *Boycott Alaska's Tourism.* Someone walked by with a steaming cup of hot coffee and a cinnamon roll, and Buck pulled ever so gently on his leash, just testing.

The opposite end of his leash was tied to his person's waist and didn't yield, and so Buck went back to watching traffic, the hypnotizing rotations of tires on the wet pavement, the spray of water squeezed behind the rubber with a moist purr. He stood four-footed on the sidewalk, his head lower than his shoulders, his gray eyes fixed, and watched each car roll past. Something in the dull dark back of his brain was ready, alert to the smaller compact, the car that slowed to a stagger at the corner, another with squishy, underinflated tires. He could pick these out, knew there was something about them that interested him. Saliva filled the space under his tongue and dripped between his teeth.

A woman and boy stopped to pet him, and he wondered, as he always did, what sort of people allowed their children to approach strange animals. The boy was no higher than his own large head, and Buck could, if he wished, crush the child's skull rather easily with the power of his jaws, or rip his throat, or tear apart his smooth fearless face. Instead, he turned away, aloof, and allowed the two pairs of hands to fondle the silver-tipped fur along his back, the thick ruff at his neck. His person explained, as she had a million times before, that he was a wolf hybrid, half wolf. His parentage was actually more complicated than that, involving husky, shepherd, and a village dog or two along the way, but he was certainly part wolf, and looked like one, with his long legs and high back, his narrow muzzle, eyes that were indisputably intelligent.

"Bucky-boo," his person murmured. "My buckaroo boy." She scratched the top of his head, right where he liked it, and he swept his bushy tail back and forth.

The people waved their signs and chanted. *Stop the slaughter. Stop the slaughter. Stop the slaughter.* Shoppers walked between them, amused, or concerned, or looking away. Cars beeped their horns. An older Native woman wearing a fur-trimmed *kuspuk* stepped slowly through the crowd, her bare hands locked on the handles of two shopping bags that plunged to one side and the other, nearly touching the ground, with each mincing step. A bearded man in a beaver hat stopped to argue with the demonstrators, then walked away shaking his head. "Wolves have rights, too!" someone shouted after him.

Buck sat down close to the curb, his tail tucked safely against his body. His mouth fell open into a nervous, steamy panting; he wasn't accustomed to being in the center of so much activity. At home, in the fenced yard of his person's small blue house, he knew perfectly the length of his chain, every magpie he guarded his dish against, the smells that were his own. The cars went faster here, in thicker, noisier groupings, and trackless gray pavement stretched as far as he could see. He leaned toward a narrow strip of grass that ran between the walk and the street, and sniffed, but the grass, despite its chlorotic color, was icy dead, odorless. He would have leaned all the way, nose to ground, except for the tug of his leash, his umbilical connection.

He stayed leaning, the pull tight and comforting against his neck, and watched a squat brown dachshund round the corner and make its leashed way along the far sidewalk. Buck found something vaguely appealing about the other dog, though he wasn't sure if what he wanted from it had to do with musky smells and a fixing operation he only vaguely remembered having, or with his one true appetite. He imagined closing his jaws on the back of that fatty neck, a snap, a couple of fast chomps, hot raw meat in his stomach, better than all the grease from all the roasting pans he'd ever licked.

The people talked among themselves and held their stick signs high, pitching and dipping them as though they would fly them like kites into wind. Buck squinted

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his eyes and wished for a Frisbee flung hard down the length of a far field, for the hard bite of plastic in his teeth. The people chanted again, and then they laid their heads back, exposing smooth, whitest necks, and they howled. His person crouched beside him, her lips extended into a snouty pig-faced pucker only a whisker length from his face. She howled, and the others howled, high and low and rumbly, long and righteous. They didn't sound like wolves, or dogs very much, or coyotes, but still there was something in the dissonance of their song that roused an old ambition in Buck. He whimpered and licked his lips.

"C'mon, Bucky-baby," she said. "Do your thing. Help us out here."

He heard the howls all edging into and overlapping one another, yippy and mournful and crooning, and he put his own head back and let loose one more sad and separate cry.

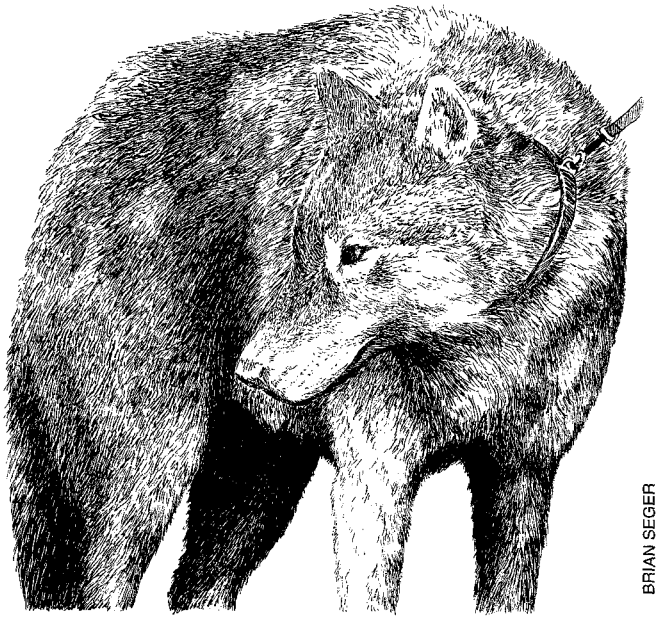
The bull moose was gigantic and magnificent, with a powerful chest and antlers that blocked the light. For days Buck had been following it through deep snow, nipping and giving chase, never allowing it a moment's rest. It was his largest prey yet, and he was determined to bring it down, to make the kill, to feast to his heart's content. He drooled in his anticipation, as he crouched and waited—his cunning, his intelligence, his fine physical condition all honed to a hunter's perfection, all about to pay off. He was so pleased with himself he wagged his tail, and in his wagging, thumped against the back of the couch and woke himself from his dream.

Even as he was registering the couch, the darkening room, the wet clusters of snow falling on the far side of the window, and the sound of the radio in the kitchen, he was still wagging his tail, still trying to hold onto the dream. He could smell the rancid fear of the moose, and he knew he'd been only moments away from turning the animal, avoiding a last exhausted kick, ripping into the critical tendons. He could almost feel the crash of the moose onto the snow, the taste of its red-hot blood.

Across the room, the electric heater kicked on—coils glowing, fan whooshing warmth toward the couch. Buck stretched, scraping his feet over the upholstery, shifting his weight until he rolled onto his back with his legs in the air. Ah! The heat felt good. The couch felt good. As much as he was disappointed to wake from such a dream before its climax, he was not so sorry to find himself where he was, amid his creature comforts. The radio played classical music, sweet and low; his person always left it on when she went to work, partly for his entertainment but mostly as a deterrent to thievery. He was glad for this, glad he didn't have to take the entire responsibility for home security—to risk having his neck jammed in a door by some hoodlum, or being shot.

The days-long, stomach-pinching hunger of his dream had faded to an ordinary rapaciousness, and Buck rolled back over and then dropped his front feet to the floor. He stared again out the window—the thick flakes swirling around the eaves, plastering themselves to the side of the collapsing pumpkin on the back porch rail—and took his time dragging his back legs off the couch. He stood in the window, and the breath from his nostrils blew a frosty area in front of his face until all the outside world looked frozen and blizzard-blown. He could just see his chain where it was snapped to its overhead line, and a clean white surface to everything he'd trampled earlier, to all his yellow snow.

Buck padded softly toward the kitchen and, still the hunter, crept cautiously to his bowl. Leftover oatmeal, with raisins, formed a mound like a gut pile, and in another second he was upon it, grabbing and swallowing with a fierce, competitive hunger that sent gobs slather-



BRIAN SEGER

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ing from the side of his mouth onto the woodwork and refrigerator. He licked his bowl clean, licked the linoleum floor. He drank deeply from his water bowl, imagining all the while that he'd broken out the fresh water himself, that he'd found the thin outlet edge of a pond and shattered its ice cover by rearing up and punching down hard with his huge front paws. This was how it was done, in real wolf life, in his alpha dreams.

At dusk, his person took him for a walk in the woods. The snow was old now, the trails packed by hikers and skiers and dogsled teams. Unleashed, he ran back and forth and in circles—chasing scents, kicking up snow, wrestling a broken branch. A startled squirrel dashed between trees, and Buck tore after it, scattering snow in his mad scramble, coming within inches of the fast, flicking tail and then leaping twice his height up the side of a spruce trunk in a last desperate act of predatory pursuit. His teeth snapped air.

His person, leash wrapped around her middle like a cinched-up belt, laughed at him.

Buck continued to circle the base of the tree, jumping against it as the squirrel chittered and shook its flamboyant tail just beyond his reach. Each time he moved to one side of the tree, the squirrel picked its way to the opposite side; when he circled back around, the squirrel went the other way, so that all he could even see of it was an occasional bulging dark eye, that maddening tail.

His person went on ahead. "Buck," she called. "Buckely-buck, here, boy!" She broke off a stick and threw it along the trail.

He pretended he didn't care about the squirrel or the stick. Nose to the ground, he ran after other scents. A shred of Tootsie Roll wrapper stopped him for a sniff, and then he kept on. He dove under a snow-crusted bough and sent a shower of white powder all down his back and through the brush. Chickadees cheeped after him.

He went away from the main trail, and he heard his person calling after him, "Come, Buck, come," and then fainter, and then more demanding in tone but fainter still. He ran through the woods over squirrel and stray dog tracks, past piles of broken spruce cones and the tiny, scratched footprints of shrews, around a stand of birches. He came out of the woods at the edge of a subdivision, paused there a moment to look at lighted houses, to listen to distant barking. Two children were playing on a snow berm in a cul-de-sac, their nylon snowsuits zinging as they flung themselves headlong over the side.

Trotting, he kept to the edge of the woods. Past back yards filled with swing sets and recreational vehicles, he felt again as he had in his moose dream: at ease in his skin, slinky and alive, purposeful. He could no longer hear the call of his person, but listened instead to something more ancient—a pulse, an impulse—that led him forward. He was strong and smart and famished; he knew himself to be the animal above all others, the top of the heap. His broad feet padded easily, quietly, over the snow.

He paused again behind a darkened house, looked at the empty driveway, a crumbling snowman. Packed pathways connected the house to the woodpile, the toolshed, the hutch. He slunk low and breathed hard, felt the fire rising in his belly, made for the hutch.

Chicken wire covered the hutch front and bottom; a littering of rabbit droppings speckled the snow underneath. A pair of small gray rabbits huddled and twitched in a corner filled with straw. They shrank from Buck and made little, high-pitched squeals. He held them with his eyes. For a minute none of the three moved—not the rabbits, not Buck—and then his back leg—the one he'd lifted and not quite set down again—quivered.

The rabbits pressed against their wall.

Buck attacked. He took on the hutch, its screening, its heavy wooden frame, the hinged and hooked lid. He fought with his claws and teeth, with snarls and foamy drool, while the rabbits screamed. He ripped staples from the chicken wire, splintered wood, clawed his way under and through the rocking hutch. He got his big head inside, and he chomped the two pet rabbits, wolfing them in bloody pieces, pink ears and hide, meat and cottontail, leaving nothing but a tipped hutch, blood in the snow, a spilled serving of rabbit feed and crisp, frozen lettuce. The taste was ferocious and sweet, fought-for, earned, wildly satisfying.

"Hey!" someone yelled from a neighboring house, and Buck streaked back to the woods. He stood in shadow and gulped mouthfuls of dry snow, watched the door close on a square of orange light, the man disappear again. He trotted farther into the woods and rolled in the snow, back and forth, forcing the clean powder through his fur, wiping his chin, his face, feeling the taut fullness of his belly. Then he shook himself and trotted back, across squirrel tracks, around deadfall, back to the main trail.

His person wasn't far from where he'd left her. He bounded up, gleeful, as though he'd accidentally misplaced her and only just found her again.

"You bad Bucko," she said, but her voice was more relieved than angry. "Where have you been?"

He wagged and pushed his head against her, and she reached a gloved hand into her pocket and pulled out a tiny bone-shaped dog biscuit. He took this from her, with all the daintiness he knew, and crunched it once in his back teeth before he swallowed. As she leaned over to clip the leash to his collar, Buck licked her full in the face. Life was good. Life was rich. The couch, the heater, the music, the dreams awaited, and then it would be time again to eat. □

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LAURIE LUCZAK

DOOR TO DOOR

A Story by Dan Coffey

Last night I couldn't sleep, so I decided to go door to door and sell life insurance. I'm not really a registered life insurance agent, but selling comes naturally to me. My mother says I'm a born salesman.

When I was a kid, I sold magazines door to door. Also seeds and greeting cards. Always hoping to earn that bicycle. Usually, I only made one of the smaller prizes, like a yo-yo. But with age comes ability and determination. Last night I was feeling

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pretty desperate, in addition to able and determined. That desperation gave me an edge.

It was pretty late when I started. Maybe 11:30. A lot of people were asleep, or watching TV in their bedrooms. I could see the colored light flashing on their bedroom curtains.

Most people simply refused to answer the door. Those who did were worried. They thought I was the police with bad news. So it was nice to see their faces relax when I told them I was simply checking on their life insurance needs. Were they well covered?

One woman seemed awfully confused, so I gave her the whole pitch. Ma'm, people buy life insurance for love. It's the gift that keeps on giving. There's no selfish reason to buy it. You do it because you want those who depend on you to be just as well off if you're not around as they are right now, when you're still able to put your John Hancock on the dotted line.

This confused woman kept nodding, thinking maybe I was really the police, trying to break some bad news through circumlocution. I must have awakened her from a deep sleep. She had a really loud doorbell.

As I kept moving from house to house, my feeling of desperation only increased. It made me even more determined to make a sale. All that afternoon and evening it had felt like I was losing my mind, and now I was taking the only action that seemed appropriate.

I STOPPED JUST BEFORE dawn, went home and fell asleep on the couch. When I woke up, the kids were watching cartoons on TV. They were surrounded by sticky waffles. Must have gotten into the freezer and found the frozen waffles. Put them in the toaster, found the syrup...too bad they didn't know about plates.

I made coffee and started trying to clean the pancake syrup off the rug. The thought came into my mind, "My wife is going to be furious...," but then I remembered I'm divorced. This is my weekend to have the kids. Since I live with my mother, maybe she'll be furious, but knowing her she'll just shake her head sadly and clean up the mess herself.

I reached into my jacket pocket for a match and found the checks. Two different checks, for different amounts. One for $117, the other for $350. In the "memo" section of each, it read "Life insurance premium."

I sat down. What had I given them in exchange for this money? My business card lists my professions as cosmetologist, key duplicator, and notary public. Neither is something you peddle door to door.

If only I could put my powers of persuasion to some real use! I've tried hiring on as a real salesman at a real company, but their lack of appreciation for the full range of my knowledge and skill does me in every time. I quit within a week. I've never been fired. Why give them the satisfaction when I can take my knowledge and skills elsewhere?

Still, living with my mother while I'm in my forties isn't doing a lot for my ego. I tell others that I'm taking care of her, but actually, she still cooks for me. I do very little around the house. I tried doing my own laundry, but she wouldn't stop doing it for me, so eventually I just gave up.

She'll be eighty next month, and shows no sign of slowing down. Some days I can't even get out of bed. I lie there trying to come up with a good reason to get dressed and I can't. Eventually, I get hungry and stagger into the kitchen, but as soon as I'm fed, I go back to bed.

MAYBE THE REASON I can't sleep at night is because I sleep so much during the day. I don't know how people get anything accomplished during the day. Sunlight makes me sleepy. But at night, I find myself getting more and more nervous. Energy that makes me want to get out there and...sell life insurance!

I'm thinking of trying to sleep outdoors. Under the stars. The fresh air giving me hope and energy. Me, snuggled in my sleeping bag. There's a flat spot up on the roof. It's a platform they built for a TV antenna they had up there before they wired the house for cable.

Maybe if I could sleep out in the open, on that platform, like God intended, things would come easier. Maybe then I wouldn't have to keep going door to door. Cold calls are always the most difficult. I'm going to try sleeping on the roof, and see if all that fresh air straightens out my thinking.

THEY ADMIT ME TO the emergency room and stick me in a corner. William Shatner and Chad Everett are on

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call, and that gives me confidence. I'm in good hands. Angie Dickinson is the nurse, and as usual, she looks great. How old is she now?

I'm wondering if the other nurse is Julie "Cry Me A River" London, but in my pain I'm getting her mixed up with Ann Margret. Does Julie have red hair? This nurse is honey blonde, but she could be strawberry blonde under fluorescent light. When I feel better I'll have to remember to ask.

They won't give you anything for pain until a doctor sees you. Even though the doctors are standing nearby, they're consulting with each other about something else. I know they're not talking about me. My ears aren't burning.

But there is a burning sensation all down both legs. I wonder if that means my neck is broken. The longer they let me lie here in this corner, the harder it's going to be to get me to X-ray. When you break bones, the area swells. That's why they should give me the pain medication as soon as possible. Just some Tylenol with Codeine. Darvon. Percodan. It doesn't matter to me. Just something.

Angie turns around and winks at me! Does that mean IV Fentanyl? If so, this is my lucky day! They're really taking this seriously. That makes me feel important.

I haven't told them that all I did was fall out of bed. Or that my bed is on the roof. They don't know anything about me, other than my name, and the fact that I'm un-insured. You can tell they're trying really hard not to treat me differently even if I don't have health insurance, but I know they're not too happy about it.

I can sense disappointment, especially the hidden kind. A certain icy edge in speech, a forced smile. When the nurses talk to me they make it seem like they're working overtime at being kind and patient, like I'm hard of hearing and mildly retarded.

IF I HADN'T GOTTEN UP to pee, none of this would have happened. Ever since I turned forty, my prostate has been sore, and that makes me pee two or three times a night.

It was the first really frosty night of this fall, and I hadn't reckoned on the roof getting so slippery. One moment I was looking at the stars and trying to relax enough to let my bladder drain, and the next I was lying on my back in some bushes. I'm not sure, but I think I broke my collarbone, and maybe part of my back.

Now Chad Everett is coming towards me. I remember him from all those early Seventies TV shows. He's still handsome, though a bit grayer. He always reminded me of Lee Majors.

Lee was more of an outdoors man. He and Farrah Fawcett looked great together, although I thought Ryan O'Neal and her were a match, too. I don't know who Chad has been with. Could have been another one of "Charlie's Angels." Then again, maybe no one. Maybe Chad's a loner. He seems comfortable here in the ER.

"Jill St. John couldn't be here," he murmurs, comfortingly. He's referring, of course, to the brainy redheaded actress with an IQ of 180. Jill is a charter Mensa member and, if I'm not mistaken, once dated Robert Wagner, before Natalie Wood snagged him.

Angie Dickinson comes over, all business and information. "We've canceled your appointment in X-ray. The doctors think you're problems are mostly psychosomatic. You might want to bathe more often, and avoid sweets for a few days. Oh yes, and drink less coffee. It will make urination easier."

Angie helps me up from the gurney. I'm wobbly for a few seconds, but then, like grace, strength rains down from above, solidifying my body from my shoulders downward.

"I'll be all right. Thanks for your concern," I drawl, shuffling towards the door. I wonder how I'll get home. I don't remember how I came here. The ambulance is parked in front, but no one seems in a hurry to fire her up. I stand around for a few minutes, just in case my driver is late, then slowly, very slowly, I begin my walk home.

IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME before I get my own place. All I need is a job, a steady paycheck. Then I can let the key duplication and the notary public businesses go. I might cut hair on the side, but just for friends, and just for fun.

The pain in my legs is pretty bad, but I keep walking anyway. Someday I'll be one of the people watching TV in bed. Someday, when the colored lights flash on the bedroom curtains, it'll be me up there, with a wife beside me, the kids tucked safely in their beds. The chump ringing the door bell will be someone else entirely. □

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STEPHEN PERRY

SORTA KINDA BUT NOT REALLY

"You see you got this frog.
He's jumping from lily pad to lily pad
and each landing strip is half as far
as the last, and so on."

He's lounging in the bar, green elephant ears
on his Hawaiian shirt listening—
I keep thinking: stamen and pistil,
the sex organs of an insect, probably.

He leans closer to the girl on his left,
his breath a jungle of desire.
My wife and I had an aquarium of tiny surreal frogs
who swam up and down continuously

as an aborigine breathing, an enemy sitting on
his chest—our tank was designed to fit
into a corner of a room, tall as a man—
an item we found on our honeymoon at Great Things—

"You see," he giggles, "the frog will never make it
to the shore, because half is half is half
and never the last." The girl straightens her skirt.
Her legs were purchased at Great Things.

She looks at the bar stools as if they were escape.
She looks at me. Darts are flying from the bow
of a pygmy Cupid. She spots my ring. She returns
to the jungle of his shirt. One night

I left the thermostat on too high and fried our frogs,
little floating corpses in a froth of foam at the top.
My wife was livid. *Livid* sounds like a word from the Latin,
meaning "life," as in *vivacious* or *viviparous*. . .

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"Well," says the waitress, "you'll never get two lily pads
that close together, it'll never work." She straightens
her skirt. "Well, you may be right," he says
and straightens his back, "but we're talking mathematics

here." He takes another sip from his straw, as if his thoughts
leapt from pole to pole on synaptic fluid based in alcohol.
Dendrite also comes from a Latin root meaning "tree."
It refers to the branching of the nerve cells in the brain,

or a rock or mineral bearing such a mark or marks. Susan
threatened to leave me for an aquarium salesman,
someone who knew the ropes. Susan comes from *shoshana*,
meaning "lily." Well, sorta kinda but not really.

It could also mean "rose." Who knows? Etymology is not
an exact science, or picking up girls. Yet
there's something in our blood that boils, when blondes
with black pubic hair stand against the light

and stretch and yawn. The frogs in our genes take notice,
come alive in a swamp of alcohol, of Mai-Tais,
little green bubbles clinging to the glass, a bit wobbly
from centuries of sleep in algae and axons

in the reptilian complex—then they'll climb the spine
down to your crotch, polyester or not, and hop
to attention, whether or not they're wanted,
or even married. These fantasies

are okay, as long as they never reach the shore,
and are stored for posterity by looking down into your glass.
The tadpoles rumba but you stand, and walk toward the door,
one step at a time, each half the width of the last.

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Hard Rolls

A Story by Paul Garcia

I didn't know what mescaline was. Long-haired Cohen, a period piece with his love beads, "crashed" at my place and left me ten orange pills. "They're like grass, but stronger." Then he drove off in a paisley minibus for "Californica."

On a quiet Sunday afternoon, I swallowed one of the tablets and sat on the sofa waiting. Nothing happened after five minutes, so I took another. Ten minutes: nothing. I ate a couple more. After twenty minutes I had the slightest sensation that colors were brightening, so I gulped down the remaining pills. Even today, my brother still calls me, "Stupid." I didn't know mescaline took so long to work.

I was caught up by the glow of colors. The saffron curtains were strange flowers in sunlight. The sofa was tan, but there was nothing subdued about the harsh rusty orange it was becoming. Squinting, I saw a trace of anthracite blue. From its coal tar source? It was like staring into a furnace.

I wanted to go out for air. When I grabbed the doorknob it felt like a warm hand gripping mine. I turned it. It turned back.

Controlling panic, I phoned my brother. He said to wait, he'd be right over. I watched a typical oil portrait of a Gloucester fisherman change. The Old Salt's slicker glistened with rain running over the frame and down the wall. What I thought might be my brother's shadow in the window was the sun setting. Night was falling. At two in the afternoon. I looked at the painting. It was now dry. A rising sun lit up the wall. The sun fell as I turned, then it rose and fell, accelerating. Days were passing like strobe flashes.

The magnolia tree in the yard shed its leaves. After a dark, dead moment, it pulsed with blossoms and a growth of new green, which faded and fell. This happened again and again, and then faster, on and off; a wink of life and then a blink of sleep. Where the hell was my brother? I turned again to the painting. It darkened, like a Rembrandt, then cracked and bubbled, brittle with age.

TRAVELS IN CATATONIA

My brother stormed in like a Ghurka commando and drove me to the clinic at the State Hospital. They could do nothing unless I was there for observation. My brother cautioned me against committing myself. I brushed him aside. What did he know? Where do I sign?

The injection calmed me. The emergency room's whiteness and sterility grew brighter and cleaner. The walls and furniture blanched. The attendants' skin was now scrubbed a pale pink which bleached before me into a rosy off-white. They lost their nostril hairs, their eyelashes and eyebrows. The furry forearms of a male nurse frosted into an icy glaze which blended with his milky skin and uniform.

The lights blazed until I couldn't see beyond their glare. Alone, I fell into a cool white sun so vast it surrounded me though I hadn't reached it. The motion became a kind of terminal velocity, a shell from which I could sense the passage of time as though I were outside it. My body grew weak, died, broke apart and turned to dust. I could feel time like a wind gusting and blowing irregularly.

They say it lasted two days, that I woke up catatonic and that gradually I became ambulatory and coherent.

SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE

There had been two psychiatrists on the ward's staff, Doctors Goode and Best. Goode had done himself in with morphine sulfate before my arrival. On my third day I was called to Best's office. Right away, I told him about Cohen's mescaline,

"That was the reason I committed myself, at the time I was unsure . . ."

"Insecure?"

"No. Unsure, of myself. I thought I might benefit from being here, but now that I see some of the characters you have floating around this place . . ."

"Do they seem to be floating, the other patients?"

"No. Wait a minute, Doctor, what I'm saying is that I'm not a basket case. I may have had my moment of insecurity, if you want to call it that, but I'm back on my feet and dealing from a full deck, if you know what I mean."

"No. What do you mean?"

This guy was like a brat prodding a bug with twigs. I became indignant. "Come on! I'm not stupid; I'm a college grad, I took Abnormal Psych, let's not insult my intelligence." I cut myself off. I was ashamed. Another outburst like that and I could forget leaving.

He was writing on a pad. When he finished he stared me into further embarrassment. Finally, he spoke. "You sound intelligent."

I sighed and relaxed into my wooden armchair.

He continued. "But sanity and intelligence are two different things."

I saw him two hours a week.

I wanted to leave when thirty days observation were up. How would I satisfy Best's notion of sanity? He would draw a profile from whatever I said. Jokes were out. This would be like applying for work as a

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Pinkerton; background would be important. Cohen would be a strike against me. Derangement by association. Birds of a feather freak together.

I needed a clear head. The morning hours before medication were the most lucid. I had to stop taking the daily Thorazines if I was going to think straight.

The penalty for not swallowing the all-purpose trank was to have to take injections. Still, every day I carried the M&M-like pill under my tongue to the TV room window and fed it to the pigeons gathered on the sill outside.

The orderlies sat patients around the television like plants toward the sun. Chemically bound, in pajamas and bathrobes, they stared at the tube. Occasionally one of them would explode into dry laughter. Some rocked back and forth in their chairs. One sat, his legs crossed, his tar-stained fingers lighting one Pall Mall from the ember of the last.

As soon as the pigeon gulped my Thorazine, I went to the rec room to play whist with a clique of three patients about to be released.

Haynes, an alcoholic, had been a draftsman. "I drank a fifth a day of Johnny Walker and I could draw a straight line from here to Chicago. My only problem was walking."

Conway, whose blond locks fell well beyond his shoulders, had flipped out much as I had, but repeatedly and more severely, enough so that his commune had turned him over to the State. "A half page of Osley Green, that's over a hundred hits of first-class, round-trip acid. They found me in the tractor barn. Man, I hadn't even fed the chickens."

And there was Evans, a paranoiac who had attacked his neighbor's Irish setter with a chain saw. "But I trust you guys because Conway told me you were all getting the same brain transmissions at night."

PAGING MISTER BORMANN

One day Conway pulled me aside. We walked to meet the morning coffee wagon. "Let me tell you about Evans. In a way, he's with Haynes and me because our shrink, Doctor Goode—the one who killed himself?—well, he signed our releases, all three of us."

No one else was interested in coffee, there was no line at the little wagon. We made up four cups. As we returned to the whist game Conway explained that he and Haynes were humoring Evans, trying to keep him calm the last few days. There had already been one minor snag when a polygraph operator, calibrating his equipment, asked Evans if he knew of Martin Bormann's whereabouts. Evans said, "No" and the machine indicated he was lying. Haynes and Conway wanted to leave without complications; if there were doubts about Evans, all their cases might come up for review.

I thought about that as we played whist. They were on shaky moral ground; still, their judgment was sound. Haynes and Conway soothed and prepped Evans. "Don't say anything about mind control or UFOs; these guys are C.I.A. doctors."

On their last day, we shook hands. Haynes: "I need a drink." Conway: "I wish you had that Cohen's address." Evans just muttered under his breath: "I'll get them now."

STRANGE PLANET

Fields, a poet with a slim book of verse to his credit, had settled into the asylum in order to dedicate himself to a more ambitious volume. He persuaded the psychs not to release him, yet convinced them that he could be trusted to work alone.

I first ran across him in the small library. The only person there, Fields sat at the end of the long table, agonizing over scattered sheets of yellow paper torn from a legal pad. I found a book and read at the opposite end of the table. That became a morning routine. The few times anyone entered the room Fields never looked up, but, instead, would rub his brow in an attempt to deepen his concentration and ignore the intruder. He'd scribble on the legal pad and I'd read for the few hours until the lunch bell rang. At that time he'd look up and stare across the table at me as though he'd just landed on a strange planet.

But he wasn't strange. Usually we'd eat lunch in the large main cafeteria where all the wards mixed. He thought my fears about not getting out of that place were comic. "Just keep singing 'I Shall Be Released'." I began to worry less. We both had hearty appetites, sometimes went back for seconds. He had great praise for the food. "In a hotel, this meal would cost a good twelve, thirteen bucks." Fields was happy there; he had his work with no rent, taxes or utilities to pay. I told him I thought he was "crazy like a fox," but didn't he miss anything, women for instance?

"I sublimate the energy. Like a prizefighter in training. For now, this is my monkish role. I'll leave when it's time. Besides," he brightened, his smirk telegraphing a joke, "poetry may be a harsh mistress, but have you looked at some of the foul-featured bitches around us? Works like saltpeter. I just hope I'm not scarred by all this."

Fields was right, in his way; still, I did miss women. Not so much in a carnal sense; I was lonely for a woman's voice, for gentle ways, soft features and a bat-free belfry. These ladies were too tangle-haired and eccentric for my blood. How do you strike up a conversation with someone who is already talking to herself? And doesn't like interruptions? I saw a timid old man's

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"How are you today?" get him a faceful of mashed potatoes, then a tray across his head. You never know who you're talking to.

Yet there was one female patient, about my age, who attracted me. Her dark hair was cut short, but combed. I watched her for a couple of days before sitting anywhere near her. By then she'd noticed me too. We nodded and smiled. Neither of us drooled or broke into a fit of swearing. Her name was Jane. It turned out she was local, from my hometown. It was consoling to hear her refer to familiar names and places. "Do you know Shirley Procopio and her brother?"

"Phil? Yeah! We used to play touch football on the Commons. They lived just down the street. I think Shirley was two grades behind us."

"She was in my class. We were in Junior Achievement together."

Her clear face clouded, then beamed with good humor.

Two ladies next to us, although loud, had been easy to ignore because their gibberish was as undistracting as a foreign language. But now, after a stream of neologisms, they were talking about children. The grey-haired and grimacing hag on Jane's left said, "I've had sixty-seven kids and I'm through."

The other answered, "Sixty-seven's enough. Quit while you're ahead. Kids are goats."

"You're not kidding. They kidnapped my kidneys and dumped me on this place!"

"On display? That's the best way— two for nothing, nothing down."

"They think nothing of it. Nothing ventured, nothing lost. I'll tell you those good-for-nothings ain't seen nothing yet."

Jane saw me drawn to their conversation. "Eavesdropping? It's sad, but, you know, they're not saying anything."

I looked at her alert brown eyes. I asked her why she was there. She held up the waxy cords of slash-scarred wrists. "A mistake. I'd never try anything like that again." She pushed her cuffs back down. "I'll be leaving as soon as transportation can be worked out. My family moved to Fitchburg. The car's not running. Doctor Best won't let me take a bus alone."

Best okayed my leaving on time. At the final session I found him looking out his office window. He didn't turn right away. When he did his eyes seemed sunken, as though he were looking at the world from the back of a deep cave. He smiled, called me a "burden on the taxpayers" and then we talked about the Celtics' chances that year.

I brought up the business about Jane. "She says she could leave now. Why don't you let her take the bus?"

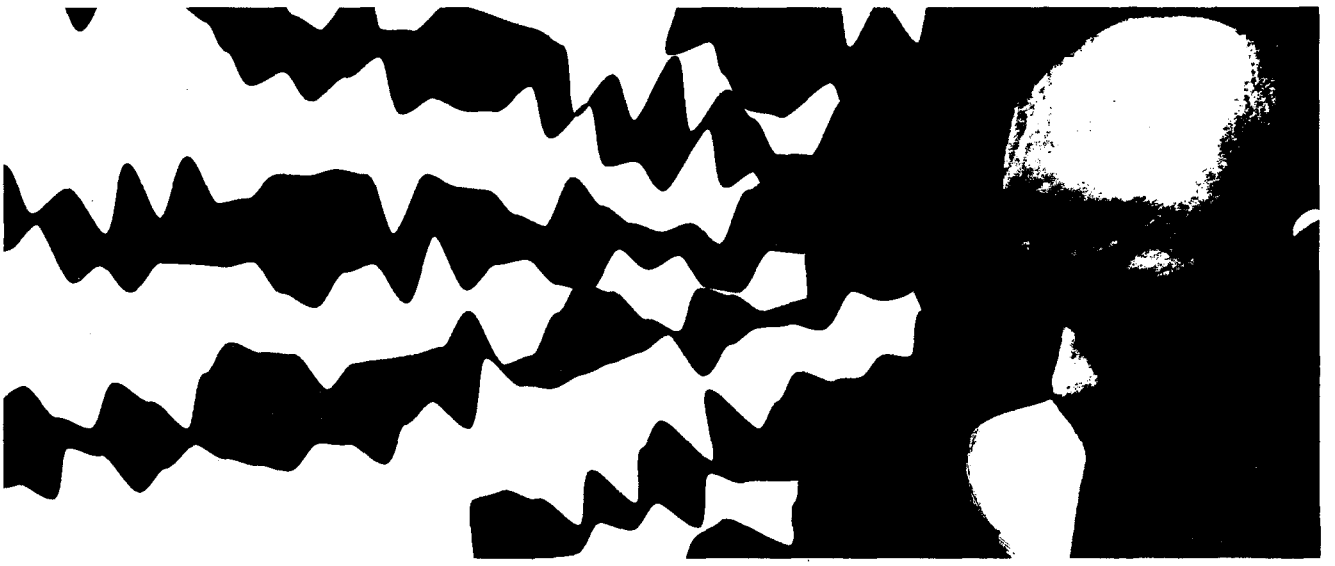
He tapped his briar against a large crystal ashtray on his desk. With a penknife he dug out a plug of smoldering tobacco. This was the signal that the hour was up. "You shouldn't worry about her."

"Why not? She could have left weeks ago. All she needs is a ride."

He sighed. "No. She's been 'leaving' since long before you arrived. She'll be here long after you're gone. Concentrate on your own troubles." He got out of his chair with too great an effort for a man in such fit condition. His eyes were as sad as any I've seen since. He smiled with his mouth as he came around the desk to shake hands. "And lay off the psychedelics."

My brother taunted me—"Where do I sign?"—but he put me up the couple of weeks until I could resettle. I took a job making hard rolls at a bakery and got a room with my first check.

It didn't matter that I wasn't making much money; the self-sufficiency was enough. I kept pretty much to myself for a time, just working, and thinking about sanity. □



OSIE L. JOHNSON JR

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■

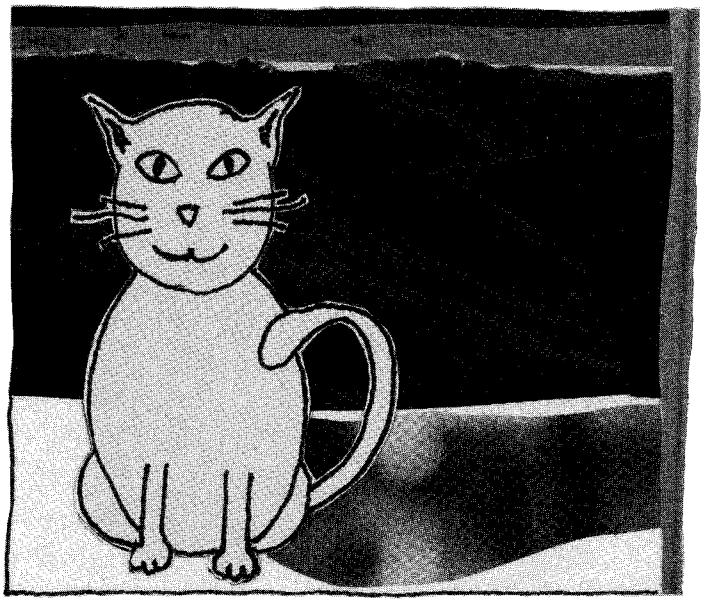
The Escort Service

A Story by Robert Fox

You have heard of escort services. You may have seen their ads in the personals, alongside the 900 numbers and their open-mouthed pictures of lust. Although this service is different, the Chamber of Commerce vacillates between denying its existence and tacitly encouraging tourism.

The escort service (there is no better name for it) exists in a small rural village which shall remain nameless. It has a history of safe conduct to runaway slaves. Many people of mixed race live here. The town has a Chamber of Commerce to represent its historical as well as natural attractions. Its charm is enhanced by bed and breakfasts in stately older homes, the only accommodations available. There are no motels. You can see the stars from the streets. Townspeople garden beside their front walks and on the strips of ground near the curbs. "Help yourself," a local gardener is likely to say as you stop to admire flowers, herbs.

It stands to reason that the escort service should exist in this unusual climate of hospitality. (The town is never overrun at the height of tourist season). The service cannot be *summoned*, yet it appears organized, for the escorts behave responsibly and consistently.



I speak of the village's cats. Every shop has at least one. During the day you'll see them curled asleep beneath India prints and incense, or under a counter displaying pita bread and sprouts. But at night they are out on the streets, leaving their shops or porches to accompany strollers who name the bright constellations and inhale the fragrance of thyme and roses.

You may be alone or with others. One of these large, proud, well-groomed and silent cats will round a corner or cross the street to join you, remain at your side or trot ahead to lead the way. You will not see a group out at night without at least one silent guide as company.

Day or night these cats do not open their mouths to issue a sound. Should you pick one up, it will prefer your shoulder to your breast, and you will hear it purr next to your ear. They do not meeow or wail, they do not complain, they do not call to one another when they are out doing their night's work. They seem to ignore one another when they pass on the street rather than acknowledge each other like city bus drivers, who will hold a conversation while blocking traffic in both directions. I imagine an exchange between escorts: "Hey Bud, what's your group like?" "Ah, they don't belong here. Complaining about the bugs. One gal just thought she was attacked by a firefly. Want to trade?"

Rarely do they trade groups, but when they do they are as quick and surreptitious as waiters in an elegant restaurant. They are superb guides. They know the most interesting and inviting homes, the ones that cause passersby to whisper, "I could live here," and they know the most fragrant gardens. They sense when you are tired and wish to return.

Back at the screened-in porch of your B & B, your escort will move discreetly from lap to lap during a last glass of wine, then it will depart before you and your colleagues bid each other goodnight. You'll see their forms outlined in moonlight or silhouetted under the street lamps, their legs gliding x's as they collect and move off separately for the remainder of the evening.

They are at home anywhere in the village. From day to day you will not see the same cat curled in a shop's sawdust or peeping out from the porch rails of homes. The cats are not patronized by names; they live above the daily humiliations of households. They are a class of respected citizens; everyone's door is open to them. In winter, occupied beds as well as hearths are available to these wandering but familiar guests. In return, they escort evening strollers, protecting them from invisible dark mythologies of harm. Some say they are the returned souls of abolitionists, warding off the ghosts of bounty hunters. They are not only smart guides but omens for a safe journey. □

TOM COCOTOS

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Prodigal Salmon

FRED TAYLOR

When I was a child, the smell of the sea was never far away. My home was a place of many waters: streams, lakes and inland seas that were also home to the salmon, watched over by the tall narrow columns of Douglas fir in the old growth forests and the great white peaks of the Cascades. Mt. Rainier and Mt. Baker stood at opposite ends of a long line of mountains that stretched the length of the horizon. Even when obscured by a gray overcast of clouds, they hovered at the fringes of thought. When the sky cleared, they emerged brilliant white against the blue, as luminous creamy cones gathering light out of the heavens. In those early years, my mother taught me to listen to the quiet voices that whispered high above in the swaying branches of the trees. From my father I learned the local art of checking in with the mountain. Each morning we looked out the window to see if Mt. Rainier was "out," spreading its white skirts over the faint distant horizon, or if it was hidden above the layers of cloud that so often dimmed our view. This daily act became a ritual in our lives, one of the things that never changed throughout my childhood years.

In school I learned that the Nisqually Indians called it Mt. Tahoma, "the mountain that was God." Living with a mountain like that, it wasn't hard to imagine this to be true. Perhaps it watched over us like a distant benevolent patriarch, the old white bearded man in the sky. I wondered if the Indians were right, even though their understanding seemed to contradict what I learned in Sunday school. Quietly, I tucked away these questions in the recesses of my believing heart, not aware of the complexities I would find there years later when I returned to the mountain.

My father also taught me how to barbecue the salmon. As a young boy, I would watch as he rubbed the dense fragrant flesh with garlic and dill, and brushed it with lemon and melted butter. I watched him lay the long, thick fillets on the grill, and learned to wait patiently while he tested for doneness, until the flesh separated easily into thick, flaky chunks. When he laid it out on a platter at the center of the family table, it seemed a feast as holy as any Christmas turkey or paschal lamb. My father always offered grace at the beginning of the meal, and ended with words I will never forget: "We thank thee for this food. Bless it to our use, and guide us in thy service, in Jesus' name, Amen." At the time, I didn't realize that my hunger at that banquet table was but a taste of a more complex hunger of the spirit that would lead me away from the comforting world of my father and his blessing. Nor did I suspect that the salmon, like the mountain, could also be a god.

Only once do I remember fishing for salmon with my father. When I was about ten years old, we went out in a rowboat on the Hood Canal. He put a line off one side of the boat, and I put one off the other. The first fish we caught was a dogfish, a small shark about two feet long, that twirled and twisted the line around itself until its ugly form lay lacerated and bloody in the bottom of the boat. We had to work together to cut it loose, and finally threw it overboard, watching it trail dark clouds of blood into the depths as it descended slowly out of sight. Later, we caught a salmon, which we laid out in the bottom of the boat where we admired its clean lines and shining silver sides, thinking about the fine meal it would make. Now I can't remember whether I caught the salmon and my father caught the shark, or whether he caught the salmon and I caught the shark. In those days, what was most important was going out fishing with dad, and bringing home the fish together.

As the years passed, I grew up and moved away, finding my adult life on the opposite coast, never far from the ocean, yet 3,000 miles away from home. I carried with me pictures of Mt. Rainier and Mt. Baker to remind me of the mountains that had watched over my childhood. Whenever possible, I returned, and always my heart beat faster when the plane flew in over the Cascades and the peaks spread out below. No matter how much at home I felt in the rest of my life, I always wondered if I had made a mistake in moving away. Looking out the window at the mountain, I felt the pang of the prodigal returning home, who fears he has strayed too far from his childhood god and wonders if it is still possible to return. As I found my place more securely in a world so distant from my father's, the journey back to his world grew longer and more difficult to thread gracefully. But I kept returning, drawn by something hidden that transcended those struggles, and by the landscape and the salmon that lived there.

With each return, my father welcomed me with the family salmon barbecue, prepared for his returning son. As the years passed and his movements slowed with age, that one ritual never changed. He would lay out the thick, firm, pink fillets on the grill, and the air would smell of cooking fish mingled with

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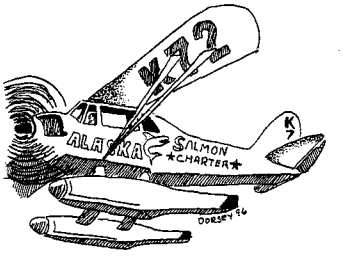
smoke. The family would gather around the table, my father would offer his blessing on the meal, and we would join in the feast.

I GOT ANOTHER CHANCE to catch a salmon from a boat many years later, while cruising on a large sailboat with my sister, brother-in-law, and an assortment of friends and relatives. The Georgia Strait off Vancouver Island is known for its good salmon fishing, so we baited our hooks and dropped our lines overboard. Sailing along briskly before a fresh breeze, under a warm sun, anything seemed possible. But once again, shark seemed to be the order of the day. Each time the line went taut, someone hauled in another dogfish, cut it off the hook and threw it back in the water. My sister joked that she'd read some great recipes for shark, but the serious salmon fishermen didn't laugh.

As the novice of the group, I waited patiently with my empty line. As the day got hotter and I grew tired, my mind drifted off across the water. I had been reading about the life cycle of the salmon, and my thoughts followed them as they smelled their way home to the river of their birth, on up into the distant mountains, where they would spawn and die, their corpses scattered up and down the stream like brown and scarlet autumn leaves.

Suddenly I felt a sharp tug on my line. The rod jumped in my hands, and I fumbled for a tighter grip against the pull of the deep. Everyone started shouting directions to me at once. "Let that line out. Give the fish some slack!" So I let the line run out. "Now reel it in—slowly." I reeled it in, ever so slowly, not wanting to lose this one. The rod pressed against the flesh of my palms and fingers, as I felt the pull, steady and strong. "That's got to be a salmon, with a steady pull like that!" Excitedly, I reeled in more and more line. "Hey, slow down, or he'll snap your line for sure." I reeled the line slowly, remembering the need for care. Then everyone hushed as a flash of silver leaped into the air, hovering for an instant above the water, showering crystal droplets of spray. I forgot everyone and their directions, while the depths of the sea flashed before my eyes, then dropped again below the surface. Now I felt the tug of a mystery as well as a fish. I pulled it closer until at last it flashed silver in the water beside the boat. Reaching down with a net, I guided in my catch and drew it up out of the water for all to admire: a silver salmon, the "coho," about two feet long and at least six pounds. Enough to feed everyone.

Now I was the hero of the day, the one successful salmon fisherman. I held the prize firmly in my hands, feeling the scaly, slippery sides, and the play of supple flesh. Someone reminded me that it was the job of the successful fisherman to knock it dead and cut it open to clean for supper. There I stood, awed by the touch of this sacred life, yet excited about the dinner I would proudly serve up for family and friends. A prayer of native people came to mind, asking forgiveness of the spirit of the plant or animal before taking its life for the sacrament of food. Quietly in my heart, I offered a prayer of gratitude for the gift of the salmon, a prayer of humility that I might somehow be worthy of it. Then I grasped it it firmly by the tail and whacked its head sharply on the deck.



I cut open the salmon, cleaned it, and sliced it into steaks. Later that afternoon, I started the fire and laid out the steaks on the grill. As I brushed the firm, bright orange flesh with butter and garlic, and sprinkled dill and lemon juice, I thought of my father. But when I served it up for the family, the words I spoke were not the traditional ones of his blessing. I searched awkwardly for new words, to speak the gratitude and reverence I felt for this gift, this god. Through the whole meal I had a hard time saying anything at all. I had never tasted salmon like this, so fresh out of the water that it still carried the pulse of the sea into my heart. Yet as I savored the taste of its flesh, I mourned inwardly for the passing of its life. Here, among these mingled flavors of pleasure and regret, I got a taste of a great mystery.

The next summer on my visit to the Northwest, I joined my sister's family on a trip to a cabin in the mountains. "The Logs" was a favorite family vacation spot, a collection of a half-dozen log cabins perched along a sandy bank at the edge of Canyon Creek, a glacial stream that carries icy water off the slopes of Mt. Baker and flows into the Nooksack River. Each day we hiked through towering old growth forests of Douglas fir, and climbed to alpine meadows where we looked across at Mt. Baker, so close its white glacial stillness chilled the air with silence. Sometimes I wandered off to sit quietly with the mountain, where I could lose myself in its great abiding presence. At the end of a day of hiking, I'd go out to sit by the stream, soaking my sore feet and ankles in the ice-cold water, and watch the water flow by, hypnotized by its quiet rippling motions and murmuring sounds.

One afternoon, about dusk, my reveries were interrupted by the appearance of several odd shapes in the water. About fifteen or twenty feet downstream something unusual was happening. Only a minute ago, there had been the gentle undulating movements of the water as it flowed over a smooth bed of gravel. Now there were these peculiar, rounded oblong humps sticking up out of the water, like fist-sized river stones. They moved slowly upstream, pushing small crests of turbulence ahead of them. As they came closer, I could make out dark shapes in the water, and the occasional flick of a fin. It took me a few moments to grasp what was happening. Salmon were swimming on their ancient migratory journey to their spawning grounds.

More shapes swam into view. I began walking with them upstream,

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stepping barefoot through the icy waters for as long as my numb feet could stand, then hopping from rock to rock to let the tingling subside. The salmon threaded their way up rapids, finding their way past swirls and eddies. They wriggled, half out of the water, over shallow beds of gravel. Coming to a submerged ledge, they pushed up over it with athletic thrusts of the tail, the way a swimmer kicks out of the water onto a rock. Their restlessness, their energy in pursuit of their goal, were thrilling and terrifying as they pushed on through the water, leaping and struggling, every inch of progress an achievement. This was another, more daring sort of god than the one I had watched from the alpine meadows that afternoon. Unlike the silent mountain, this one surged up out of the depths, struggled passionately on its quest, surging with blood and seed and life.

I followed them to a large deep pool where they dropped close to the bottom and held steady with their fins, resting beneath the flow of the current. Now I could see them more clearly in the lens of still water. These were not sleek, finely wrought specimens like the one I had pulled up out of the ocean depths. The humps on their backs looked grotesque, monstrous. Their bodies were gouged and emaciated, spotted with white fuzzy patches that looked like fungus. Fins were torn or missing. At the far end of the pool, one tried to leap its way up the next set of rapids, falling back into the flat water, unsuccessful. But still they wriggled and thrashed and leaped their way onward, and I followed, wanting to discover where they were going, what sacrament waited at the end of the quest.

Soon it was too dark to continue, so I started downstream toward the cabin, stumbling in the darkness from rock to rock. I walked in the cabin door, dazed by the bright lights and human faces. My words sputtered and thrashed about awkwardly when I tried to tell what I had seen. Stuart was a fisherman, and rescued me with an explanation. Once before he had seen this fall migration of the pink salmon, or humpbacks. He explained how the extra flesh in their humps is a reserve food supply, stored up just for this journey, since the salmon don't stop to eat once they begin swimming upstream. They literally consume their own flesh off their backs as they go, and when they arrive at the place of their birth, they spawn and die. Such an extravagant spending of the self so that life can continue. I ate in a daze. Something strange and new had entered my life. After dinner I went back out to the creek and watched the shapes wriggling and thrashing about in the dark.

Two days later I was on the plane headed east again, watching the mountain out the window. All the way back, salmon appeared in the eddies at the edges of my thought and hovered in the depths as I stared out the window into the darkness.

Stepping off the plane in Boston, I plunged into an airport world swarming with crowds of people. Suddenly jerked out of my element, I wanted to be back by the stream with the salmon. There I had crossed some invisible boundary and entered a new realm of relationship: a secret, sacred kingdom where the ways of human society no longer applied. Like a child in a fairy tale who wanders off into the forest and meets a talking animal, learning from it a secret both valuable and dangerous, my life had been changed. I could no longer slip smoothly back into the world I had left behind when I sat down beside the river.

In myths and stories of indigenous cultures, it is common to find people wandering off into the wilderness and meeting an animal who befriends them and leads them away to live in its world. Gary Snyder tells the story of "The Woman Who Married a Bear," who crosses the boundary between people and bears, and lives for a time in both worlds. She marries a bear husband and gives birth to cubs, yet remains partly human, still thinking of her human family back home. When her brothers go bear hunting in the spring, they kill her husband. She returns with them to her human family, bringing with her all she has learned from her husband about the bear world. As interpreter, she teaches of the "matter of manners" between people and bears, including the proper methods and ceremonies for hunting the bear. "That is the reason they came together," says Snyder, "for him to pass this instruction from the bear realm to the human, via her." But as he concludes, "one cannot cross between realms without paying a high price." She not only loses her bear husband, but finally kills all but one of her human brothers, and wanders off with her cubs to live alone in the wilderness, completely and irrevocably bear.

The Northwest coast Indian tale of salmon boy tells of a similar transformation and its tragic consequences. David Wagoner retells the story in his poem, "Salmon Boy," of how a boy went to the mouth of the river, where he "fell down hungry,"crawled into the water, and turned into a salmon. Joining the other salmon he followed them on their journey to the ocean, and later returned with them on their migration back to the stream of their birth. The poem captures his exuberance as he swims upstream, immersed in their world and unaware of the fate toward which he swims:

> He swam fastest of all. He leaped into the air
> And smacked his blue-green silvery side, crying, *Eyo!*
> *I jump!* again and again. Oh, he was Salmon Boy!
> He could breathe everything! He could see everything!
> He could eat everything! and then his father speared him.

Perhaps mine was a similar hunger, a yearning to immerse myself in the world of the animal ancestors. Was the salmon calling me back, beyond the world of my personal childhood to my ancestral past, where the boundaries that separated humans from other creatures began to fade? Did swimming with the salmon mean moving further and further away from my human family? I began to sense risks and dangers to this journey.

But it was too late to stop now,

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for the journey was already underway. Several months later, I had a powerful dream. At the first meeting of a new class, I asked my students to introduce themselves by telling their true secret name. When it came my turn, I said my name was "brother to salmon." Up out of the darkness of my dreams swam the silver salmon, once again shedding the spray of the ocean depths. I knew that the salmon was to be my animal companion and guide. Now I would have to follow wherever it led.

The next summer I rejoined the family for a trip to The Logs. As we drove up toward the mountains, Mt. Baker rose in the distance behind the foothills. We turned up the Nooksack River road, and the great white peak dropped out of sight. Now all I could see were dark firs towering overhead to blot out the sky, and the rushing, grey-green glacial river. I rolled down the car window, and felt the cool moist air mingling smells of fir forests and mountain waters, the smells of home.

When we arrived, I rushed out to the creek to see if the salmon were there. Something in the landscape had changed. The gravel bed through which the stream braided its course had widened, and was now strewn with piles of rocks, rubble, and several dead trees. I sat down by the water and waited. No bumps rose up to ripple the stream's smooth surface, and no tails or fins splashed and flicked about in the water. The stream was empty. I sat for a long time before going back to the cabin to join the family.

When Rod, the owner and caretaker came by, I asked him where all the salmon were. He explained how the "humpies" have a two-year life cycle, and only return every other year. The newborns, or alevins, hatch out under the ice in the winter, swim with the current in the spring, and by the next fall are far out at sea, grazing on rich pastures of shrimp and krill. Only the following fall do they return to spawn. Since each creek has its own population with its own two-year cycle, the humpies would never run in the same stream two years in a row. So I would have to come back again next year to find my salmon brother.

But Rod was already worried that there might not be a run next year either. Last winter, a major flood had swollen the creek high over its banks, taking out a swath of forest fifteen feet wide in some places. The surging water had carried tons of gravel and sand down off the mountain and its glaciers, picked up huge boulders and tree trunks, and deposited the cargo along the way. Rod was afraid that this deluge of water, sand and gravel might also have carried away most of last year's nursery of salmon eggs. The migration I had witnessed would have been in vain.

We talked about some of the reasons behind the flooding. Rod mentioned the new Forest Service policy of massive clear-cutting. Old growth forests of cedar and fir that once blanketed the lower slopes of the Cascades were now being cut down, leaving huge bare wounds on the side of the mountains. After the cutting of the trees, there were no roots to hold the forest soil in place. Soils and tree roots together normally absorb like a sponge the heavy rains that fall from these cloudy skies. But now, when the rains came, soil and water just washed away down the stream, picking up sand, trees and boulders. The salmon eggs, deposited in nests or redds just beneath the surface of the gravelly stream bed, could easily have been scoured out and carried along by such a torrent.

I had a lot to ponder as I went back out to sit beside the stream. Much had changed in the last year, and the river's silence was a disturbing note in my developing relationship with the salmon. Ever since childhood, I had thought of it as a creature of great abundance. All these years, while I had been off living my own life, I had never dreamed that this symbol of nature's prodigality might be struggling for survival. I thought that, like the mountain, it was one of those things that never changed. But with this new information I realized that the salmon, too, was in danger. Even the god of plenty was vulnerable.

I began to explore the interconnections that held the salmon in place in its world, and to try to understand the dangers that threatened it. It had never occurred to me to consider the impact of the forest's health on the life of the salmon. But it is as much a part of the forest as it is of the stream and the ocean. Trees normally soak up immense amounts of water during the rainy fall and winter, protecting the redds from flooding. Later in the year, as the summer sun heats up, the forest shades the streams from direct sunlight, and keeps them cool by slowly releasing the colder water that has been held in the soil all winter. Too much warmth too fast might kill the young salmon fry, but the forest keeps the stream at the right temperature. And just as it is incubator for the young salmon, so it is also their nurse. Detritus that washes into the stream feeds caddis flies and other aquatic larvae that are the major source of food for the newly hatched fry. So it is that, in Tom Jay's words, "the forest is mother to the salmon."

Even more surprising was the realization that the salmon in turn help to nurture a healthy forest. Much loved by bears, they are also a staple in the diet of many less visible forest carnivores: wolves, coyotes and cougars, as well as a variety of smaller mammals and birds. And they help feed the life of the forest in even more subtle ways. After spawning, their corpses remain in the water to rot, enriching the soil and stream with nutrients brought all the way from the ocean. In *Mountain in the Clouds* Bruce Brown explains that ten thousand years ago, this enrichment of the land helped reclaim for life the wasteland of gravel, boulders and clay that remained after the retreat of glaciers from the last Ice Age. In death, the salmon was a bearer of life, helping to create the foundation on which the forest community flourished. In his eloquent essay,

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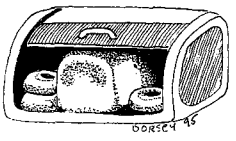
"The Salmon of the Heart," Tom Jay describes the salmon as

> a kind of current between the forest and the sea. One study shows that salmon may accumulate rare trace minerals (boron?) that, passed on through the forest food chain, provide chemical materials for green plants that are unavailable to them through local geologic and hydrologic processes. In other words, the trees nurture salmon and salmon nurture trees (alchemical salmon turning sea into soil, salmon eyes in the treetops). The salmon is the archetypal resource—-meaningful energy directed by unseen powers. It is the *incarnation* of the forest-sea connection, silver needles sewing the ties that bind, religious fish.



What had begun as a lesson in ecology was leading to a place where science opened out into the mysteries of life.

And so the salmon taught me to look at the forest in a new way, to see the pathways and currents that connect it to other places, other homes. Each part of the landscape that had inspired reverence in me as a child, I now saw as part of a larger whole. The salmon that brought nutrients to the forest, the streams that provided their spawning grounds, the trees that protected and nourished them as young, the great sea that fed them with its abundance, even the great white mountain from which the streams flowed into the sea: each was necessary as a part of the whole—none could exist by itself.

As the salmon swims on its migratory path, each of these places makes a unique and essential contribution to its growth. Just as in its home stream it is woven into the total fabric of life, each time it moves to a new place it enters a new life context where it also belongs, nourished in a particular way and playing a part in the whole. While the forest provides a nursery for the young fish, sheltered from predators and rich in nutrients, the ocean offers much more abundant fare to feed the growth of the adults. The waters through which the salmon swims are not just the background to its life, like the changing scenery behind an actor on stage. They *are* that life. Salmon simply would not be salmon without the shifting waters of its changing homes.

The more of this I understand, the less it becomes possible to separate out the salmon as I once did, loving it by itself as a creature of dignity and beauty whose life has a great deal to teach. As John Muir put it, I had picked something out and found it "hitched to everything else in the universe." To honor the salmon means learning to honor the entire matrix of life that gives it its being. Philosopher Holmes Rolston writes that "loving lions and hating jungles is misplaced affection. An ecologically informed society must love lions-in-jungles, organisms-in-ecosystems, or else fail in its vision and courage."

Have we learned to love salmon-in-streams, and in forests, and in oceans? The evidence is not encouraging. We love salmon at the banquet table, yet with our many hungers we have constructed barriers in each of the homes through which they swim. We clear-cut their forests to feed our hunger for wood. We build huge dams on their rivers to feed our hunger for energy. And we follow them out to sea with huge fleets of boats, to feed our hunger for fish. Perhaps it is we who have become prodigal, spending lavishly a wealth that is not ours to spend, leaving us in the end with empty streams, empty seas, and empty hearts.

Of course, we reassure ourselves, there will always be enough salmon to feed our hunger, for now we have created hatcheries and fish farms to provide a continuous supply for the table. But without the wild salmon, who will feed the bears and the eagles and the trees? Who will nourish our wild spirits and call us on our journeys? And who will be there to welcome us when we return?

And so I swim with the salmon, deeper into turbulent and life-giving waters. Each time I return to the Northwest, I feel the same excitement of moving back into the home stream, pulled by my longing Yet much has changed. Flying in over the mountains, I can't help but notice the ugly swaths of clear-cut forests, where range after range of hillsides are stripped bare. And my father has died now, so others have taken on the ritual of the family barbecue. The taste of the salmon still thrills me, but a weight rests heavy on my heart. And when it is time to leave, the same haunting question comes painfully into focus: if the salmon keeps calling me to return to the place of my birth, aren't I ignoring it unless I return to stay? Someone in the family usually puts the question to me the most directly: why don't I stop all this traveling back and forth and just come back home where I belong?

THEN ONE NIGHT in a different landscape, beneath a desert sky brilliant with stars, I sat in an amphitheater full of people waiting quietly for a ceremony to begin. A group of native people from all over North America had gathered to celebrate and share with others the spirit of their home places. In darkness, the sound of a wooden flute broke the silence, rising and falling, cascading and soaring, filling the night air with sounds of longing.

Then came a voice, deep and resonant, echoing with the sounds of earth:

> I hear songs floating on the wind.
> I sit down beneath the giant, ancient tree.
> I hear its voice floating on the wind.
> Floating down off the slopes of the sacred mountain,
> Floating down over the streams and pools
> where the salmon swim and spawn.
> Listen to the voices floating on the wind.

The flute played again, its music carrying the sounds of the wind, the trees, the rushing waters that had spoken to me as a child. Tears streamed down my cheeks, as these words and flute sounds from a man I had never met enfolded me and brought me home, as surely, as deeply, as the arms of the father

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welcoming home the prodigal son. The salmon would always be my brother no matter where I lived. And I would also be brother to this man who lived with the sacred mountain and its sacred fish, and brother to all people who listen for the call, as it speaks in the sounds of wind in the trees and rushing mountain streams. I swam up out of the depths, gasping for breath. I broke the surface, shedding and shaking the waters once again, and breathed deeply the night air.

THE NEXT SPRING I returned to salmon country. They were still out at sea, or perhaps the young were just hatching out under the ice that lingered on the upper reaches of the streams. I didn't even look for my salmon brother, but I felt him beside me in a new way I didn't yet understand. Only at the end of the trip did I realize what had changed. While waiting in the airport, I took out a snack from my pack, some crackers topped with chunks of salmon from the family barbecue. With each bite, I felt again the sacramental power, healing and binding together the split fragments of my life, my homes east and west, my families of humans and other creatures. For the first time I understood that the salmon wasn't calling me to return to the land of my childhood to stay, but to keep coming back again and again, just as I had been doing. The return was the ritual. The journey itself was what nourished my imagination and sustained my soul.

Like the salmon, I had been raised in the protection of a home stream, and had left the place of my origins, sensing that it couldn't provide the nourishment to fulfill my life's journey. Other places enabled me to grow in ways not imaginable back home. That was why I could never simply return once and for all. Yet I was called to return, again and again, each return bringing a spawning of new life, a birthing of creativity, born not of one home or the other, but of the passage between.

But the journey of birth was also, like the salmon's, a passage through death. With each return, I plunged into deep waters where the old certainties fell away: my sense of belonging to a home, even my sense of belonging to the human community. But with each movement through this death, I emerged again, bearing new life, ready once again to swim downstream to the ocean. Each place died for me as the secure home where I could stay forever, and was reborn as a necessary way station along my life's pilgrimage, through which I would swim over and over again. As Teilhard de Chardin writes, "uniting oneself means in every case migrating, and dying partially in what one loves. We can set no limits to the tearing up of roots that is involved on our journey into God." Now, I was myself the migrant. Like the prodigal son, I was guest on the land, and giving up ownership, I now received gifts I hadn't dreamed of when I claimed it as my only home.

And so the salmon has initiated me into a new kind of journey, not the displaced travels of the wanderer, but the purposive search of the migrant. I follow my own particular paths across the landscape, weaving together the places that nourish me. As my home expands to include the whole, the journey itself becomes redemptive. The earth is my sacred place, both healing and healed.

Like Salmon Boy's, the journey has carried me into distant waters, far from the human place of belonging. Swimming back and forth between my kin the salmon and my human family, I encounter difficult questions and surprising gifts which lead me into the larger circle of the earth community. So by listening to the call of our animal brothers and sisters, and entering their world, we swim, crawl or fly our way toward new understandings of how the human family is bound up with the family of earth. Schooled by the journey, we can only trust that when we return, we will not be greeted with the father's spear, but with the encircling arms of our fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers, and their legs and their tails and their fins. □

"Most of the time," I tell myself, "I'm almost always here, at least twice a day."

M. KASPER

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NIKKI HERBST

The Discomfort of Reincarnation

If you stare long enough at rain
it becomes
—no
I do not love information.
What I like to believe
is that at the last he was able
to lie down comfortably with no thoughts.
Not even the memory of our last time outdoors together
—his wheelchair parked at the edge of a kidney-shaped lagoon,
he and I nearly covered with ducks, geese and pigeons
grabbing fresh bread in whole slices and reaching for more.

December in Arizona and I was in shorts,
thrilled at the soft warm breasts of the geese
as they pushed against my legs.
He laughed in scattered short syllables that might
have been words.
I cry at the memory of my own complex laughter,
a fact I don't care to examine.
He could be one of those selfish birds.

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T. S. Eliot's Peripatetic Apostrophe

LAWRENCE DOUGLAS & ALEXANDER GEORGE

KIM TEMPLE

> After the production of my play *The Cocktail Party*, my mail was swollen for months with letters offering surprising solutions of what the writers believed to be the riddle of the play's meaning. And it was evident that the writers did not resent the puzzle they thought I had set them—they liked it. Indeed, though they were unconscious of the fact, they invented the puzzle for the pleasure of discovering the solution.
>
> —T.S. Eliot

WEDGED INCONSPICUOUSLY between an essay by George Saintsbury on "Dullness" and a short story by T. Sturge Moore, "The Waste Land" first appeared in the Fall of 1922 in the inaugural number of *The Criterion* (I, 1, October 1922), the British literary review that T.S. Eliot would edit for over a decade. Almost simultaneously, it made its appearance across the Atlantic in *The Dial* (73, 5, November 1922), the influential journal edited by Eliot's friend Scofield Thayer.

Though the texts of the British and American editions reveal certain minor discrepancies, one is particularly conspicuous—for it reappears on no fewer than five occasions. Toward the end of the poem's second section, "A Game of Chess," the speaker sits in a public house and tells a bitter tale of marital woe only to be repeatedly interrupted by the barman's closing call. *The Criterion* prints the publican's oft-quoted words as "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME," while *The Dial* reads "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME." Eliot's intentions—or at least, his original intentions—appear clear, as his typescript consistently reads "IT'S."[1] The American text was ostensibly in error.

One would have expected this misspelling to have been quickly spotted and corrected in subsequent editions of the poem, especially in view of its five-fold recurrence. Instead, it demonstrated a persistence of an almost viral nature. The New York publishing house of Boni and Liveright, known for its fastidious copy-editing, failed to remove the mistake from its first American book edition of the poem,[2] and once the error gained this textual foothold west of the Atlantic, it never relinquished it: every subsequent American edition of the poem, up to and including the present Harcourt editions of *The Complete Poems* and *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, reprints the mistake.

Far more provocatively, however, the error managed to find its way *back* across the ocean into the originally error-free British editions. These, of course, include the definitive volumes issued by the London house of Faber & Faber, which employed Eliot as editor from 1925 until his death in 1965. Although it may at first appear unlikely that Eliot would allow, let alone abet, infestation by such an error of the very editions under his editorial supervision, some bibliographical scholars have claimed that it was Ezra Pound who convinced him that the American mistake was in fact an improvement upon the original, as the absence of all punctuation in the barman's cry better advanced the modernist struggle against the finicky constraints of hidebound nineteenth century poetry.[3]

Unfortunately, such explanations

[1]Valerie Eliot (editor), *"The Waste Land": A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts* (London: Faber, 1971), pp. 12, 14, 18, 20.

[2]Boni and Liveright, New York, 1922. It is not widely known that this edition is corrupt, largely because in Valerie Eliot's transcription, *supra*, the error is corrected without notice.

[3]See, for example, Elizabeth Hawes, *Hurry Up Please Its Time* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1972). An even more radical group of scholars insists that Eliot altered, perhaps even unconsciously, the spelling to suggest the call of the peep-show barker: "Tits time!" See, for example, Guillaume de Peckre, "'(T)ITS TIME': Repressed Sexual Imagery in 'The Waste Land'," *Gender Theory Review*, Volume 7, No. 1, Winter 1990.

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conspicuously fail to account for the most unusual feature of this corruption: its peripatetic quality. The error, for example, is absent both from Faber's limited edition of *The Waste Land* (December 1961) and from the second impression of *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (Faber, 1971). As the first impression *was* corrupt, this latter instance is particularly tantalizing for it indicates the unmistakable intervention of an invisible editorial hand. Yet, this veiled effort to extirpate the error remained incomplete, as it at once resurfaced in subsequent Faber editions.

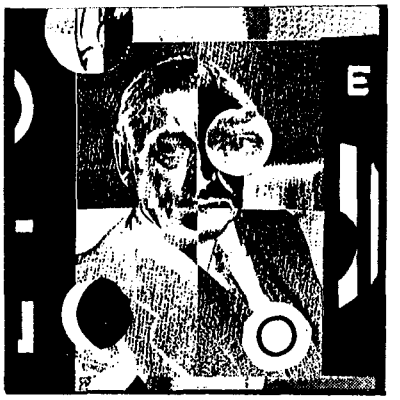
More intriguing still is the publication record of Eliot's *Selected Poems*. First issued in 1948 by Penguin, this volume was untainted until the late sixties, when, suddenly, we find the misspelling cropping up in the paperback editions issued after 1965, the year of Eliot's death.

The mystifying process by which this error has quietly and selectively infected "The Waste Land" has not been completely overlooked by Eliot scholars.[4] For years, however, these studies contented themselves with a descriptive genealogy of the error. A *reading* of the error was first made possible in 1982 when J.J. Glove, in an incident that received substantial press attention, claimed to have discovered hitherto unknown material prepared by Eliot elucidating his most famous poem.

[4]See, for example, Macdonald Daly and Alexander George, "'It's' Misspelled: History of an Error in 'The Waste Land'," *The Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand,* Vol. 11, No. 4, Fourth Quarter 1987 (issued November 1989). Regrettably, some critics are not aware of this work and have sought to make substantial hermeneutical hay out of the possessive; see, for example, Blotto Pappert's influential *"The Time is Now Propitious": A Critical Essay on Time in "The Waste Land"* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1989), whose main thesis is that "Eliot's early concern with the appropriation of time was expressed not only at the level of explicit content, but also at the morphological level, for example by the bartender's refrain 'HURRY UP PLEASE ITS [sic—bp] [sic—ld & ag] TIME'." (p. 58)

2.

IT IS A WELL KNOWN, curious feature of "The Waste Land" that it comes replete with its own textual endnotes. These notes were not originally printed with the poem, but were later appended by Eliot to help readers through its thicket of allusion. The status of these notes has been the subject of much controversy, as they seem to conflict with the "anti-intentionalist" view of poetical meaning which Eliot himself defended in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In this essay, Eliot famously argued that even when modeled upon particulars of the poet's life, the poem transcends its source and, as he suggested elsewhere "there is, in all great poetry, something which must remain unaccountable however complete might be our knowledge of the poet, and that that is what matters most."[5] Eliot's notes to "The Waste Land," by contrast, seem designed to help the careful reader decode the poem by retrieving his intent.



HALLIE LANDT

Moreover, questions have been raised about their veracity. In several instances, the references seem so inapposite to the text they mean to clarify as to suggest that Eliot was merely joking. In the much scrutinized note to line 199, Eliot says "I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken: it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia." Scholars have failed to track down this ballad, and it was the prominent literary critics W.K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley who first expressed the suspicion that Eliot simply made it up.[6] Indeed, Eliot himself described the notes as that "remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship."[7]

These controversies notwithstanding, academics have long relied on Eliot's notes as a guide to understanding the poem, and the announcement by J.J. Glove in 1982 that he had discovered a second, more complete set of notes, prepared, so Glove claimed, by Eliot shortly before his death, stimulated near hysteria in scholarly circles.[8] Thus, despite the reigning spirit of anti-intentionalism, Eliot critics fastened onto the new endnotes in the hope that they would shed light on the parts of the poem left unmentioned in the original commentary. For our purposes, they seemed particularly relevant to a reading of the tale in the public house, as they claimed to reveal the poetic sources for the scene.

Thus in the notes discovered by Glove, we find:

> 141. Cf. Meyer J. Gant, "Its Time Is Growing Near":
> 'A betrothed's haste, an infant's face,
> It happens in a year.
> The touch of God, the smell of sod,
> Its time is growing near.
> Nearer and nearer draws the time,
> The time shall surely be
> When Earth filleth with spirit so Sublime
> As the waters cover the sea.'[9]

Eliot's numbering "141" refers, of course, to the first refrain of "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME." Gant's doggerel speaks powerfully as the poetic provenance for the barman's cry. Its imagery of betrothal and fertility finds grim resonance in Lil's attempts to sterilize herself so that her husband's brutish

[5]"The Frontiers of Criticism," reprinted in *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 124.

[6]"The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954). See also Flash Jetson, "From Sydney to 199," *Notes and Queries,* Vol. CLXXXVII, No. 3, Summer 1988.

[7]"The Frontiers of Criticism," p. 121.

[8]J.J. Glove, "New Notes for 'The Waste Land'," *Ars Poeticum,* Vol. LXVI, No. 4, October 1982.

[9]"New Notes for 'The Waste Land'," p. 314.

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sexual appetite does not lead to another unwanted pregnancy; the association of God's fecundity with water finds precise inversion in "The Waste Land"'s controlling trope of barrenness; and the messianic evocation of Divine Time appears in Eliot's verse as temporal anxiety—the barman heralding not the coming of the eternal Kingdom, but the closing of the pub. Indeed, here the suppression of the apostrophe in the barman's cry seems to function as an implied ellipsis: "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME . . . IS GROWING NEAR." In Eliot's poem, however, Time belongs not to God and his coming Kingdom, but to the exhaustion of a world condemned to sterility and decay.[10]

Unfortunately, dispute within the scholarly community about Glove's notes has raged ever since D.E. Stag challenged their authenticity on the basis of extensive stylometric analysis.[11] It is only now that these questions can finally be put to rest, and with them some of the mysteries that we have scouted above.[12]

3.

What information we have about the life of Jeremy Jackson Glove was discovered only very recently upon examination of his correspondence with Eliot, his superior at Faber for over three decades. Glove came up to Oxford (Oriel College) in 1913 to read Greats. Little is known of his years there, though in one of Cecil Beaton's famous photographs of anointed Oxonians posturing by the fireplace of their digs, a nameplate bearing "J.J. Glove" can be dimly discerned through an open door. Glove's life is first illuminated in a letter from Eliot, dated November 4, 1929:

> Dear Mr. Glove,
>
> Thank you for your commentary on "Sweeney." It's one of the best pieces I've come across about my own work and I must confess that your use of the Agamemnon metaphor to suggest the grim death scene in the fifth book of *Ovid* makes me think of my own work in a new light. *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo!*
>
> As to your inquiry regarding employment opportunities at Faber, I'm sorry to report that at present our only opening is at the copy-editing position. No doubt you will find elsewhere suitable employ more in keeping with your education; if, however, the position should interest you, I urge you to contact our Director of Personnel, Howell Higley, mentioning my name.
>
> Regards,
>
> T.S. Eliot
>
> P.S. You and I must have been contemporaries at Oxford. Perhaps we crossed paths.[13]

Shortly thereafter, Glove did gain employment at Faber, quitting the Hogarth Press to do so, apparently much to the ire of Virginia Woolf, its co-publisher.[14] In fact, he died one of Faber's longest employed members. What little else we know of his life at the publishing house—indeed, of his life in general—is revealed through Eliot's letters in strobelike bursts.

> Dear Mr. Glove, *January 29, 1930*
>
> Compliments on a splendid job. To discover syntax in Spender's prose is no minor feat. Generations of future readers will express their silent gratitude.
>
> Good wishes,
>
> Eliot
>
> ***
>
> Glove: 1.iii.30
>
> Touché—encore!
>
> TSE

Nevertheless, Eliot's pleasure with Glove's perspicuity was not unalloyed, as the following bear witness.

---

[10]For further discussion, see our "Time and Time Again: Repetition Compulsion in *The Waste Land*," in *Eternal Re/Currents*, Vol. IX, No. 2, Summer 1980.

[11]See "If The Glove Fits," reprinted in his *What We Talk About When We Talk About Texts* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986).

[12]The resolution of these matters came about quite fortuitously. A very brief obituary of Glove in *The Daily Telegraph* (February 13, 1992, p. 33) was spotted and sent to us by a colleague familiar with our work on Eliot (see note 10 above).

Our attempts to learn more about Glove, however, met with early frustration. Glove died intestate and access to his papers has involved a lengthy and complicated legal dispute regarding the common law doctrine of "scholarly domain"—the vesting of legal rights in the unclaimed property of academics. Under a recent court ruling, the present writers have been permitted to examine these papers (under supervision of a municipal bailiff) and have been granted the right to quote from them for scholarly purposes only.

[13]Eliot had originally gone to Oxford from Harvard in 1914 with the purpose of studying with F.H. Bradley, whose work had formed the subject of his doctoral dissertation in philosophy *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*. Though he never met Bradley, whom illness had turned into a recluse, Eliot considered himself indebted; in a candid letter to Lytton Strachey, Eliot wrote:

> Anything *I* have picked up about writing is due to having spent (as I once thought, wasted) a year absorbing the style of F.H. Bradley—the finest philosopher in English—*App[earance] and Reality* is the *Education Sentimentale* of abstract thought.

[Valerie Eliot (editor), *The Letters of T.S. Eliot (Volume I: 1898-1922)* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), p. 299.]

Unfortunately, the admiration seems not to have been mutual. In a correspondence to A. E. Housman from early 1919, Bradley writes: "I'm sorry that I have nothing helpful to say about how to apply my views in 'On Floating Ideas and the Imaginary' to poetry. Personally, I have never fancied its fruits. A few years back a gentleman from Harvard—a Professor Proofrocke, if I recall—tried to sell me on the merits of the apples of the day and make a pitch for the aesthetical conundra he thought they raised. I tell you, both the apples and their worms were left unbitten in my palm." For further discussion, see our forthcoming biography *F.H. Bradley: Philosopher of the Absolute, Absolute Philosopher* (New York: Harper & Row, in preparation).

[14]"Oh Lenny, how the salaried class wearies me! They're as loyal as a loose button, a small coin. Still, I will miss Mr. Glove, his rough and hairy voice is like an unshaven chin." Quoted in Victoria St. Mongre-Butte, *Blooms Buried: A Secret History of the Eliot-Woolf Feud* (London: Queen Square Press, 1987), p. 253.

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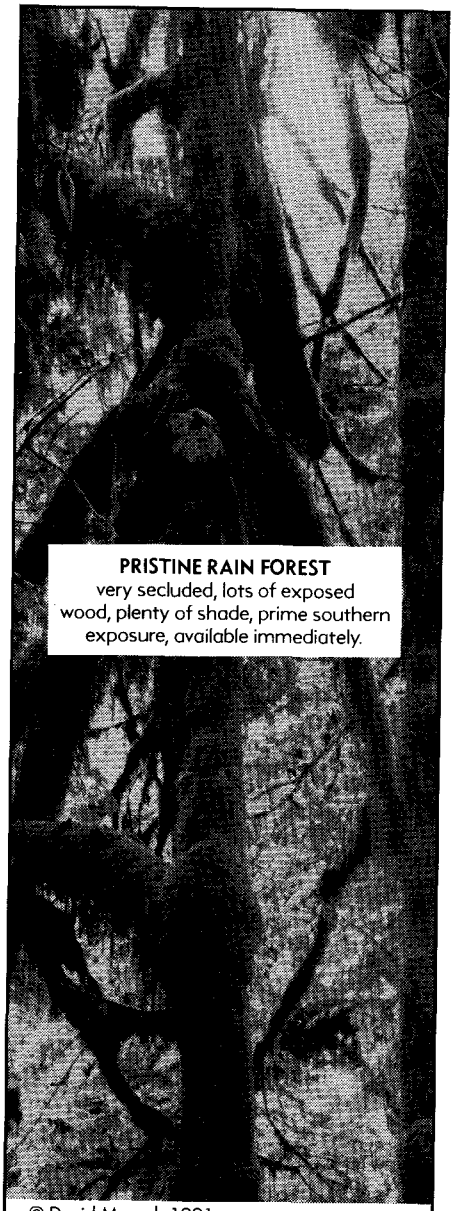

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JJ: *April 24, 1935*

Though I agree that certain of the WHA [W. H. Auden] poems lack strength and are of unsound structure, it goes without saying that the copy-editor's function may not trespass into re-writing. Please assure me that we are in agreement on this point.—TSE

***

Glove! *April 25, 1935*

Yesterday's letter did not invite colloquy. Whether your redactions in the galleys make the poems more "Wystanish"—as you put it—is quite beside the point. As fine a line as needs sometimes be drawn between matters syntactical and those aesthetical, such is hardly the issue in this case. If you do not set the original—and burn those galleys!—I shall be forced to find someone who will.
Eliot

Glove's copy-editorial ambitions were not the only source of tension between the two men, however.

JJ: *July 23, '41*

Thanks ever for sending me a sampling of your work. Why, I had no idea that you were a fellow traveler. (All these years, and never a word breathed.) Quite resonant, they are, with a voice both stripped of pathos and striped with periaxos. As to publication, well, they would deserve it. But the house can't afford it right now, what with paper rationing and all. (You heard old, fat Faber last week with his peroration to parsimony: "belt tightening," indeed—as if he could slip a belt round *that* waist.) Perhaps at the end of it all, if there is an end to it all.
Yours most, etc.
TSE

During the next several years, as Eliot became increasingly absorbed by his Anglicanism and his literary reputation, he writes less to Glove, who was himself preoccupied with a newfound interest in Judaism that culminated in his conversion sometime in the mid-1950s. The correspondence that survives describes an Eliot ever more consumed by the spread of errors in his work (most notably, the one we have been discussing) which, to his mind, floated unstoppably from edition to edition. The following is quite representative:

Glove: *June 8, 1954*

Wracked by another attack of apoplexia apostrophia! We've seen this possessive bugger fouling editions of WL ["The Waste Land"] for years now. Can't you get a grip on the problem once and for all, or will nothing short of a call to Scotland Yard do?
Eliot

Glove seemed unable, however, to extirpate the error and the following casts a strange light on this failure.

Dear Mr. Glove: *March 1, 1957*

Mr. Beardsley and I would like to thank you for putting us on to the poetry of Meyer Gant. Neither of us has yet come across his works, but as our interest in "The Waste Land" remains strong, we shall try to find some of the texts you mentioned. We also plan on querying Mr. Eliot himself about some of these matters, but, as you may know, we have our doubts regarding how forthcoming he is likely to be. Should you have any further information, do please send it our way.
Sincerely,
W.K. Wimsatt

Despite these differences, Eliot came to rely on Glove to such a degree that it would not be unfair to say that he eventually functioned as Eliot's personal amanuensis at Faber.

J'my: *October 5, 1959*

Congratulations on your promotion! You must be very pleased: no longer the galley slave. Well done! Stimpson-Piggott tells me that you've requested to stay on as proofer of my poems. Why, that's deeply moving—and reassuring too. What say we have a celebratory nip tomorrow afternoon? Five at the King's Corns?
TSE

The error in the barman's cry, however, proved to be "The Waste Land"'s bump-in-the-rug and its persistence functioned as a kind of leitmotif during Eliot's final years at Faber.

Dear Mr. Wimsatt: *May 20, 1960*

I hope you will not find me too brusque if I say that, no, unequivocally no, neither Maier [sic—ld & ag] Gant's poem nor anyone else's provided a model for the barman's cry, and hence, with all due

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respect to the view you propose, there was no allusion at all. (As far as I can recall, I have never even set eyes on so much as a line by this minor poet whose name was, I confess, unknown to me before reading your letter.) It is a printer's error, no more. But no less tenacious for all that, I'm afraid: I have fought it over the years to little avail. I am deeply sorry that our carelessness here at Faber has encouraged you, and no doubt others, in this wild hermeneutical hunt, which is only the most current unsightly efflorescence of the misguided investigation of process.[15]
Sincerely,
T.S. Eliot

JJG: 20.v.60

Damn it man, rid the text of this infernal blot once and for all! Enclosed you'll find yet another Symbol Sherlock for the files. Christ, once the academics start sniffing down this hole, there'll be no end to it. Let's get the job done now before this rank perennial outlives us both. —TSE

With time, however, Eliot's response to the error, and to queries concerning it, shifted both in tone and tenor.

Dear Mr. Beardsley: *April 3, 1963*

Thank you for yours of March 1. No, you are not the first reader to note the reference to Gant's poetry in "The Waste Land." But, I am afraid I cannot say anything very helpful about my acquaintance with Gant's verse. I have a dim memory of encountering it sometime during my stay in Oxford. As regards his work's informing some of my own poetry, I confess that I no longer have access to what influenced my composition of poems written now some four decades ago. I am sorry to be of so little service to you.
Sincerely,
T.S. Eliot

P.S. I have taken the liberty of passing your letter on to J.J. Glove, an associate of mine here at Faber who is quite the expert on Gant's verse: he is, I believe, at work on a monograph on the subject.[16]

[15]Eliot is in fact here quoting from his essay "The Frontiers of Criticism," p. 119.

[16]Though the present authors located among Glove's papers the title page of a manuscript, *Meyer J. Gant: A Study in Poetic Echolalia*, subsequent research failed to uncover any further text.

***

J: *December 21, '64*

Enclosed, your corrections to *Collected Poems* unchecked, unread. Too tired these days; besides, the eye is gone. Anyway, you know the texts as well as I do by now; better, most likely. Thanks for understanding. —T

This proved to be Glove's last letter from him, for Eliot died shortly thereafter. Glove, on the other hand, lived for several decades more. In spite of this, next to nothing is known of his last years. He retired from Faber in 1966, though the precise circumstances are unclear. In the early 1980s, he made public what have come to be known as the "Glove Notes" to "The Waste Land," which, as remarked, have occasioned much discord within the worlds of poetry and scholarship. Glove himself steadfastly declined to comment on them, and the bitter calumny to which their disclosure subjected him no doubt contributed to the reclusiveness of his last years.

His papers from this time reveal an aging pensioner preoccupied with his declining health. Of interest are a few lines of unpublished verse, a meticulously maintained collection of bibliographical studies of "The Waste Land," and a brief unsent letter addressed to "Messrs. Wimsatt and Beardsley." In it, he makes his only known statement regarding his connection to the disputed notes. "My role," he writes, "was merely that of creative midwife." No further biographical information exists.

One might think that a definitive resolution of these matters died with Glove himself. It is questionable, however, whether the controversies could have been resolved even had Glove chosen to break his silence. As Eliot himself once claimed, it is the reader, not author, who must solve the riddles of a text. □

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Haan

DAISY RHAU

Le marché du soleil est entré dans la chambre
Et la chambre dans la tête bourdonnante.
—Tristan Tzara

LAST MAY, I FINALLY grasped my family beliefs in the immensity of soul, from the way my lover could not stand the scent of melons. He tells me this, yet every week I stand at the grocery store to watch this tall Italian man lean down, pluck a melon from the bottom of a pile, and scowl. He turns over each one as though too much handling might cause them to burst, wet and heavy in his arms. All this care, I think, and still I know he will come to me full of melon smell—his clothes, his palms redolent of the honey, the dust and sweet grass he could never stand. He will have climbed a whole mountain of melons in search of the perfect one. They give me headaches, he once accused. To me, to anyone.

Don't buy them, I told him. Practical advice. Or, have your melons delivered. Conduct smell experiments with other fruits. Test for allergies. But to all this he only grunted. Said, I *like* melons. And walked away from me.

There are things I no longer ask of the ones I love, not as a matter of space, but as a matter of admiration. I should have had more respect for his mixed feeling about melons. I have eaten them at least twenty-three years of my life: these musk melons, or our Korean melons my mother carved, crisp, like apples. I have eaten melon chutney, grilled melon, and melon soup. But only his reaction has changed for me the plain look of them. I eat them now in the same way I eat a mysterious green party dip or any wine punch—out of sheer trust in the unknown truth of it. No longer just a melon; I am eating someone's complex feelings.

As a first-generation Korean growing up in America, I have learned the importance of this, the quiet abrasions of accepting true stories, unique dishes, without asking too many questions.

Thank you, I have been taught to say. Or, *You shouldn't have bothered.* Whether one is Korean or Westerner, these are the correct answers. I have given these answers to people who have given me intricate accounts of divorce or hygiene. Who have offered me homemade wine from pine cones. Boiled vegetables with sugar in them. Even as I am wondering inside: *What is this*? Or *Why*?

THIS IS WHAT, my grandmother announced, long ago, counting my fingers up and down in different Korean ways. I can still feel the dryness of her small hand, although I could never tell you, why so many ways of counting. Only that when asked, she always replied with finality. *This is the way*, she would tell me. And somehow I grew up having an intuitive sense of it in my speech—which way was for active counting, which was for expressing sum, and which for indicating place. *Imagine the stories*, I think of her saying. Imagine that I counted my fingers like this when I was four.

To this day it is her imagined voice I hear, through the thick of an American life that rather exalts by asking questions, by insistently pulling life apart—from human nature, to party foods, to love affairs: everything nowadays is explained. I can talk to people and suddenly see (dis)played: a platter of memory regressions and canned artichoke hearts tossed with enumerations, cream cheese, Derrida, or self-deprecations. Always *why*s and *what*s, all these self-deprecations.

The man I love is pleased to be unquestioned around me, as he walks his loathed and adored melon out his front door. On his porch it lolls alone, set on a table until the minute it is eaten. I see it mostly greeting and leaving, although once—during a dinner party—I watched women reach their braceleted arms over the melon to tap their cigarette ashes off the rail. Whenever we sit out there together, the melon sits opposite us, on the other end of the porch. At the grocery store, last May, he wrapped the melon in plastic bags, saying to me,

They fill the house with grief.

And I ached from the long smell of melons. Of course, I knew there could be any number of negative associations, rationalizations, to explain this grief. It's the smell of natural decay, someone said, the strong sweetness of it. Probably it comes from a bad memory, another one claimed. *Who cares?* I think to them all. Isn't it simply that his saying it illumined the amazing truth of it? I realize now, honey or no, the scent of melons makes me sad —immensely, and gently, sad.

There is a certain sadness I have grown up learning, as to how it lights us to things, opens vision. To smell these melons now will always remind me of what my parents and grandmother have taught me of the feeling of *haan*—or what I think of as a Korean feeling because there is no translation for it. I can quote from scholars, and say that to feel *haan* is to feel limited, alienated from self, nature or God. I know it only as a yearning, as a feeling of being dropped out from an unreachable goal.

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WHEN MY MOTHER talks of *haan*, she thinks most often of how my grandmother first came to see us from Seoul when I was four years old. It was 1973, and at that time Koreatown in Los Angeles was barely four blocks wide. It was an honor that my father's mother was coming to this wild place. For Koreans, the family tradition was to expect her to stay—to guide my mother, enjoy grandchildren. It seemed reasonable then for my mother to withdraw both my father and herself out of graduate school before her new mother arrived, and to cash in their moment's tuition for small ways to honor her through the years. I imagine my mother spent it quickly, on better rice and fresh fiddleheads, silk comforters, a better bed for my grandmother to sleep on. I do remember the flurry, though I could not have known the fullness my parents felt in their hearts, each the youngest in their respective families, and each the first in America—only that they were unemployed students eating off a cardboard box in the middle of South Central L. A. In the bright, bluish pictures of that time, I am never standing but always held, and my younger brother is wearing the gold-embroidered silk pajamas normally reserved for sons of emperors. Into all this my grandmother arrived—a remarkably small woman, who in one look surely noted my parents' thin faces and the gape of all our eyes. She stayed three weeks, taught me ways to count, scolded my parents' foolishness with budget, and then went back to Korea. It was, my mother tells me, a deep rejection.

How I felt *haan*, my mother says angrily. And sometimes, more than twenty years later, she cries again. Not because they were suddenly alone, and certainly not because my grandmother thought them silly, but because by returning to Korea, my grandmother had left behind her every good thing my parents strove to create: their children, their lives, all they had believed—everything my mother put into her cooking-pot or mended, as a way of looking better for my grandmother, who nevertheless, in my mother's mind, thought them all worthless.

I had no arms, my mother tells me, in her way of telling me this grief. "Not hopeless," she'd explained to me, as years before when she'd read me stories of Kim Chi Ha, a poet imprisoned for his words. "But *haan* is helpless from anything good: having no power, having no arms." Listening to my mother express such *haan* made me want to tell her how I too feel helpless in my lungs when I hear her sadness. Whose hurt was this?

Is this my *haan*? I asked her. Or yours? To this she whispers on the phone, I don't know. What are you talking about now?

My father tries to explain. "You see," he tells me, "*haan* has no place to hold. Impossible, because it is too big to find pinpoint. Whose *haan* when *haan* is ultimate?" He talks of my grandfathers, both of them killed by Japanese or Communists. He talks about Whitehead's process of creation. Relates it to *I Ching*. He shows me a Möbius strip. I dangle this white twist of paper on my finger. "Do you see?" he asks, triumphant. "Infinite," he says, "singular."

I look at my father, and although I cannot understand him, I can think of how he has subsisted definitively within the clamor of our family life—a small man, who crouched in the middle of our living-room floor and read the books of his inner life amid our questions, our shouts and arguments and my endless piano exercises. To me, it was not this circle of paper on my finger, nor was it the infinitely singular measures of counting my grandmother had taught me. It was my mother's wide grief, and my father's ability to accept the concordances of all our lives and remain a dreaming soul—although no one could have told me then what this meant to me, to us.

"When our people feel *haan*," my mother cautioned, "we cannot explain."

This is true. I have noticed that until recently Korean poets and philosophers have rarely elaborated on personal senses of *haan*, although it has been a constant sadness in our lives, a lengthy bone we keep always in our bodies even as we work and sleep. Even now, *haan* is discussed mostly in sociological terms, as a cultural "tag" that identifies our Korean psyche. It is my feeling that we do not often talk about it intimately because *haan* is a loss that does not pierce, but rather keeps us weightless in the space of it, or from a constant feel of it, so that we become vividly aware only when provoked by a smell or a word, or a small death.

Haan-yi manta, my mother murmurs to me. There is much *haan* here. She says this when we walk up into the San Bernadino mountains to collect acorns, just as she did in the foothills of Sah Rhi Won as a young girl in the early 1940s, before her mother died, before the split and pain of the Korean War. She would never see those northern mountains again,

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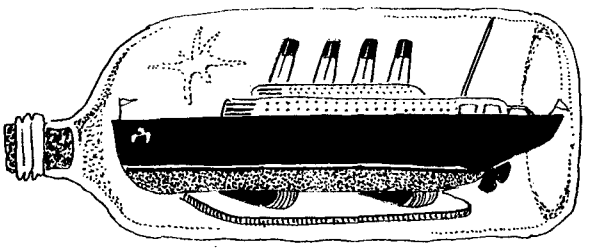
not the river that seemed to wind all the way to China. *Haan-yi manta*, she tells me, and this means that *haan* is filling all the rooms of her heart.

There are reasons I don't ask why *haan* is exactly, or why my lover aches of melons. Even as a girl, I have seen that such mysteries are only meant to be breathed, eaten. If it is a part of you, my parents tell me, there is no reason for it to be explained. In Korea, we have believed for centuries that there exists no difference between our bodies and nature, none between the spirit and our bodies. It is why some Koreans still refuse the violation of eating meat, or why mystic worlds are not seen as being separate or removed from this one. Growing up, I heard stories of how you should never lock eyes with deer. In that motionless second, your spirit could combine with the wildness there, leave you to leap into the woods on four legs. Such stories are not told to explain lost siblings as lost egos, but to describe the ease with which a soul could dissolve into immense forests of other dreams. The *haan* of my parents, the *haan* of my double experience of it. In Milosz's *L'amoureuse initiation*, he writes, "... in this unreal air, distance beckoned to distance. My love enveloped the universe." I was learning, even before I realized, that explanations were deficient to one's own felt meanings.

So it was that I was fully eighteen before I understood that the characters of the Korean language represented the shape of one's mouth and throat upon pronouncing it. As with so many major revelations, this one came as I worried and ate my rice and pickled beans. My father, complaining about the difficulties of translation, mentioned it in passing as though it were a given, a knowledge I had had ingrained in me all along, plainly lumped as my grandmother's nose on my face. In a similar way, years before, I discovered that had we been born in Korea, my brother would have been raised in my Big Father's (our father's oldest brother's) home, to help balance his debt of having only daughters. How does one react to this? These were not subtle contingencies, chances we think about when we think of being five minutes early or late. These were the shocks that kept my brother and me from dissolving into the recipe of our parent's lives. Learning about my family identity has toughened our eyes to live like this—with a strong feeling that we are familiar with this world of our mother's cooking and our ancestors' language, and the comparable feeling that we don't know a thing about them. If it can be said that feelings emigrate, this would be our *haan*—feeling of being broken off in ourselves as well as from the millenia-old consciousness my parents share but cannot transcribe. My mother, born with some great disdain for lives made public, grows more reticent each year.

"Stop following me!" she threatens me, in angry whispers. "I'm not



telling you anything. Do you think it helps me when you tell everyone what is in my purse?" Standing in the bright pallor of the Schnucks grocery store last May, I thought: It does help me. I don't ask reasons for what my mother carries, nor do I mean to make them mine. Years ago, my mother had stopped leaving herself open to me when she discovered that every English teacher I've ever had knew her character and, moreover, regarded her as my "mythical focus." "Whose life?" my mother demands. To this, I tell her, My life. I am seeing through my life alone—in truth, I can't take what isn't mine. I choose only the birdlike and papered expressions of her as they fall around her in small laughters, discarded mail-order receipts and airline cookies. I admit, the fact that she does not easily disclose her thoughts draws me to closer inspection. But I never disrespect, never inflict on her the draw of dissection or dysfunction. Surely, those mysterious processes want me instead, to search out the difficult eyes of eagles or deer, even as I fully accept that there lie my own dreams in the form of unknown gods.

Henri Bergson believed that readers participate in the ghost of the writer, so that readers, too, can feel the joy of creation. So it is that when I watch my lover glower at a melon, or see my mother pull oranges out of her purse, I become that loving reader; the sentences become unfinal, huge with possibility. Although I can participate in those processes, I can no more claim their lives than they can exit the world of readers. Their immensity of soul is grasped in me in the way they stride with others, with history, and with grief—all within their own beautiful solitudes.

Despite my parents' discomfort at seeing their lives sky-open in my stories and poems, they respond to my writing as anyone would who has known the immensity of *haan*. I want to be a poet, I told them, years ago. To this I received silence over the phone, a brief postcard two days later. "Dear daughter," they wrote, "after hearing your voice last night, we could not sleep for dreams."

How long it took me to understand this, even as it settled a great happiness and torn-apart feeling. To say a thing like this, as a Korean or as a Westerner, is to risk translation into parents' minds. I want to be a poet. This could mean to them: I want to be poor Or, My life will not be safe. All parents and all children must feel this kind of *haan*. I have said that, in one sense, *haan* is a lament. But in another, more important sense, it means a flight upward, a complete and realized celebration of the humble and grounded human being: the poems I eke out in dirt-filled rows; the capacity for love to pain us. Have I ever known my parents' dreams for me? Happy or bitter? Accuracy doesn't matter. Practical advice has no place here. Last May, I understood this finally, as I watched my boyfriend pick his hundredth melon of the season. They fill my house with smells of grief, he says, but I know that the meaning of this lies in the fact that he continues to eat them, that he continues to relish their taste.

My family would have understood. □

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"Man always kills the thing he loves, and so we the pioneers have killed our wilderness. Some say we had to. Be that as it may, I am glad I shall never be young without wild country to be young in."

ALDO LEOPOLD

"We need wilderness preserved—as much of it as is still left, and as many kinds . . . It is important to us . . . simply because it is there—important, that is, simply as an idea."

WALLACE STEGNER

"The love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach. It is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, (the earth which bore us and sustains us), the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need—if we had the eyes to see."

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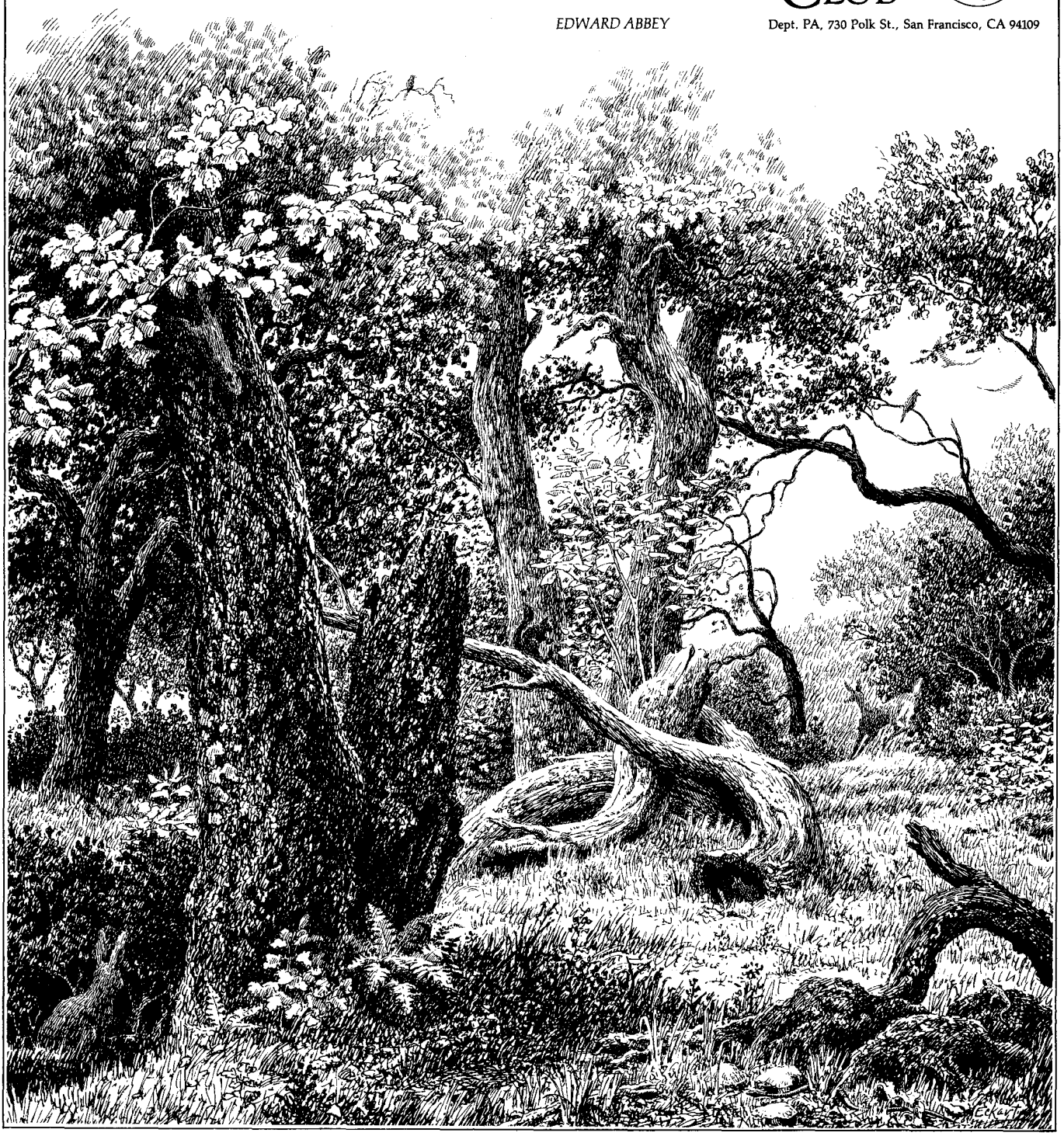

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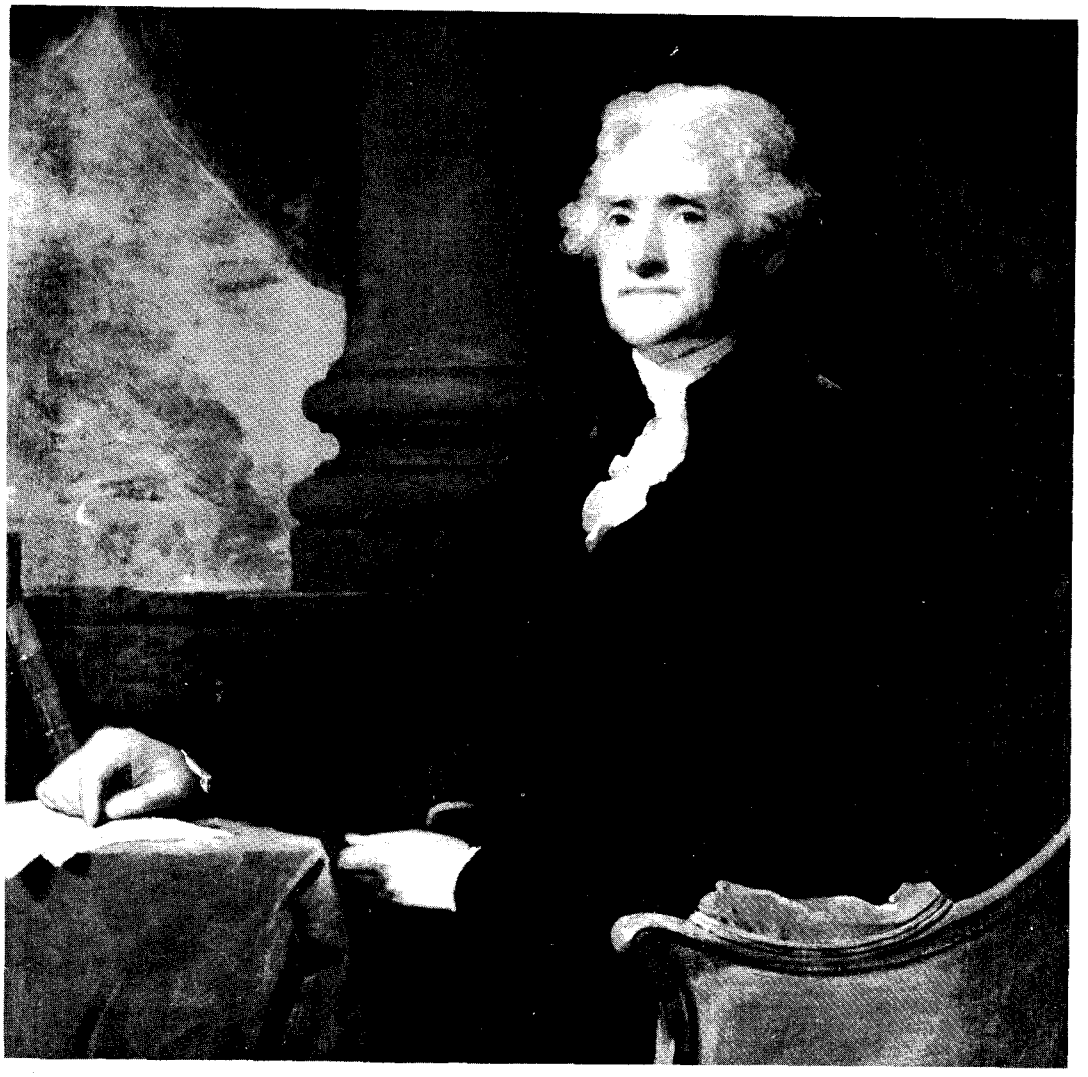

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Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

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Th: J

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